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COMIC World

APRIL 1993

ISSUE NO 14

STAND BY FOR ANDERSON!

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JOE QUESADA
X-FACTOR ARTIST

PLUS

GARY ERSKINE

IAN EDGINTON

SHADOW RIDERS

PLUS

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deadline is 50!

"Deadline reaching 50 is proof, if proof were needed, that masochism will triumph over common sense every time. I'm off down the pub." Steve Dillon.

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Peter Milligan,
Jamie Hewlett,
Phillip Bond,
Glyn Dillon,
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Rachael Ball,
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The Pleece Brothers,
John Beeston,
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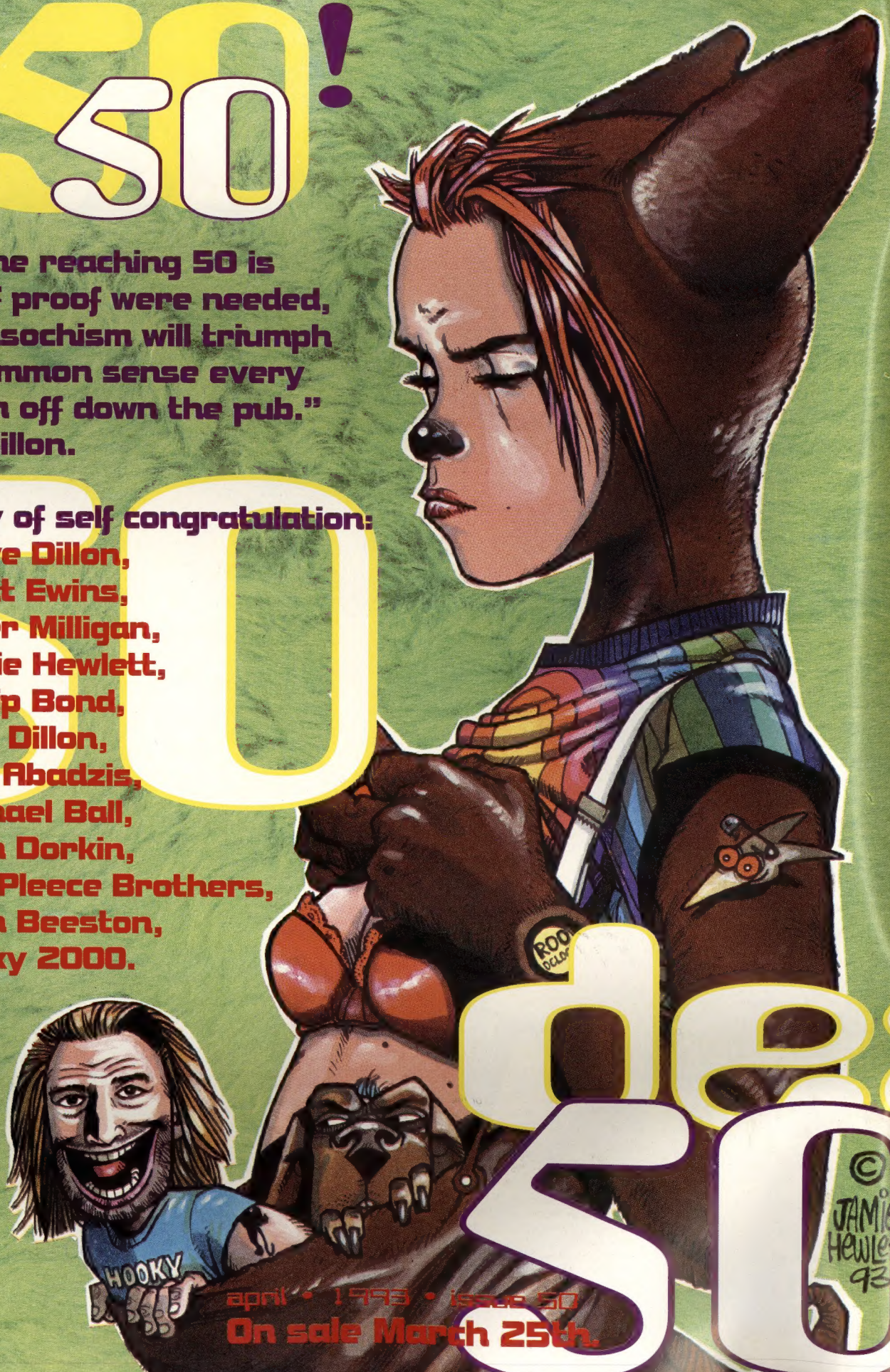

deadline 50

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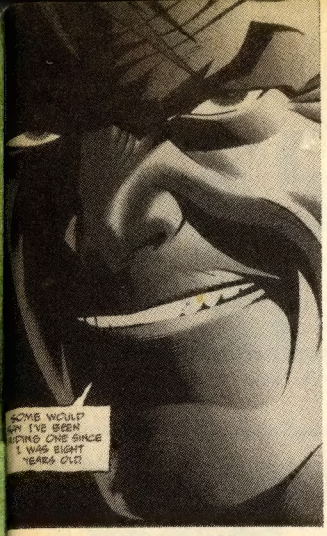

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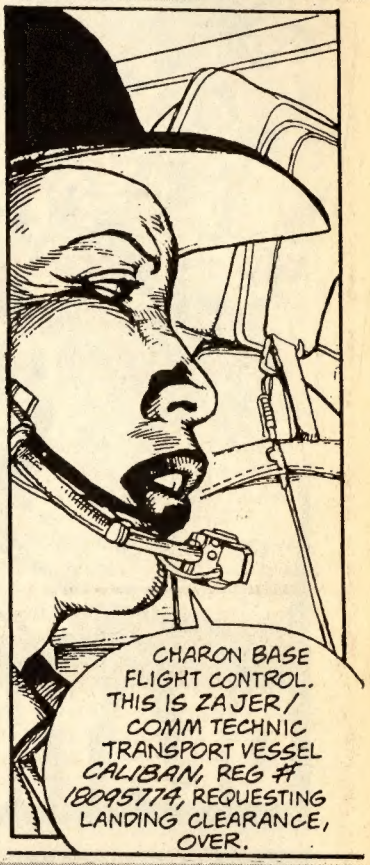
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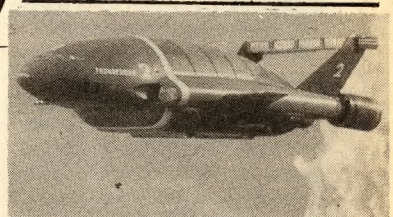

HE HAD TWO THOUSAND HOURS OF COMBAT EXPERIENCE. HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.
THE F.N.G. SAID NOTHING DURING THE FIGHT. PROBABLY JUST SWEATED TERROR AND FILLED HIS G-SUIT.

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We are all in the business of speculation one way or another. If you order comics in advance, sight unseen, you can only base your speculation on one of three things: the writer or artist is one that you've seen before, you liked and you believe that he/they will again produce something you will enjoy; you have read and enjoyed a character or group and you want to follow his/her/their adventures through thick and thin; or you think that a title will become 'hot'. You must have this hot title because either you want to rub your friend's nose in it ("I've got it, you haven't") or you will sell-on with a profit ("I've got it, you haven't, but you could have it if the price is right"). Curiosity buying doesn't seem to exist any more outside the independents and small press.

It's time to reassess the language we use when we talk about speculation and comics. A 'hot' comic now has nothing to do with the price it sells for a year after it is published. With the market swamped with speculation magazines creating hot titles months before you can even order them, patronisingly pointing out what you MUST BUY, there is little chance of your 'hot comic' being worth any more than its cover price for a long, long time. There are genuine rarities, sure, but they only happen for two reasons: word of mouth is the best advice when it comes to thinking about picking up a new series, you like it, you try to get hold of back issues. Cult series slowly become highly popular. The early Valiant comics are prime examples of the second method: the Unity crossover brought the titles to the attention of fans who had not heard of the company and who wanted to read them, who wanted to discover where their new heroes came from and how they came to be. A lot of people discovered them in a short space of time, and because the early issues were not shipped over in vast quantities, they are thin on the ground. The price rose quicker than anyone really imagined: it was the long-awaited return of demand-greater-than-supply economics which usually only pushes up 'key' issues, themselves a dead sea thanks to warnings months in advance of a new character arriving, the death of an old character, or a change in costume. Publishers don't want to surprise their readeres any more – they want the money in the coffers and that means they'll tell you exactly what's going to happen. But, then, you need to know what's going to happen because you'll be buggered if you take the comic out of the bag to read it.

Similarly, the limited edition derives its value from its rarity. They are different to hot comics, which are plentiful because fear drives the punter and the retailer to order them in vast quantities. The latest gimmick is the 'no second edition' or 'no over-run': publishers create a demand by threat, calculating that the fear of the speculative punter is so great that they will order or die trying – and they will order plenty of spares. You can't do that with a real, honest-to-goodness limited edition.

Speculate by all means, don't let us tell you what to do, but at the same time don't go crying to anyone but the publisher when all your friends have the same 'hot' comic and the retailers have crate-loads left over. Lets leave the word 'hot' to mean what it really *means these days: as common as dust and completely un-resellable. Which means we need a new title for the genuine movers, the genuine rarities. Any ideas?*

DEATHWATCH

Two of the hottest American publishing companies join forces to publish a six-issue crossover storyline that will include a meeting of characters from two very different universes.

Valiant and Image will produce *Deathmate*, which consists of a prologue solicited by Valiant, two colour-coded issues published fortnightly by Image from 1 July, two more from Valiant, and an epilogue from Valiant scheduled for 1 September. The Prologue will be written by Bob Layton, and the artwork split between two teams: Barry Windsor-Smith will be pencilling for Jim Lee, and Rob Liefeld for Bob Layton to make up the 32-page story. Jim Lee will provide the foil enhanced cover, the story involving Void (from *WildC.A.T.S.*) and Solar (split persona version from *Rai #0*) – Void appearing in a story that will bring the two characters close enough to cause a merging of the two universes. The new, alternative universe is a darker place than either the Image or Valiant universes, and various stories will be told in *Deathmate Black* (from Image's Homage Studios), *Deathmate Red* (from Image's Extreme Studios), *Deathmate Blue* and *Deathmate Yellow*, each featuring characters from both universes and each running to 48 pages with foil enhanced covers.

The whole thing is wrapped up in a *Deathmate Epilogue* another two-team book: Mark Silvestri and Bob Layton join up, as do Bob Sears and Scott Williams, Layton also handling the writing chores for the 32-pager; the foil enhanced cover is by Sears & Silvestri.

This is a speculators dream come true, but judging by Image's past record it could also be the longest running crossover in history – of the nearly 60 titles Image solicited in 1992, only 30 have appeared – missing titles including the 3-issue series *Wetworks*, for which (rumour has it) no artwork outside the advertising has been drawn, despite it being listed in the *Wizard Price Guide*, trade paperback collections are being solicited which include issues that have yet to appear, and rumours are starting to be heard of some creators planning to jump ship.

DARK HORSE'S GREAT

Comics' Greatest World **is the overall title of a 16-issue mini-series from Dark Horse which debuts in June and will consist of 16 new titles shipping weekly, all priced at $1.00. The brainchild of Dark Horse's Mike Richardson, Randy Stradley, Barbara Kesel, Jerry Prosser & Chris Warner, the series takes a unique approach by concentratin on four geographic areas as a means of introducing heroes an villains for its continuity. Some the new characters will be appearing in their own ongoing titles, depending on reader reaction.**

DEATHWATCH 2000

Continuity comics launches its own major crossover series, entitled *Deathwatch 2000*; the ecological destruction of all life on Earth is at stake and a mysterious creature called Dragon is accelerating the process. The Hybrids arrive on Earth to prevent Dragon and his evil strike force, the Hellbenders, from launching a nuclear attack on Mount Saint Helen's which has been packed with toxic waste: the explosion could cause huge eruptions and ozone unfriendly atmospheric pollution, allowing Dragon's army of underground mutants, The Titans, to take control of Earth.

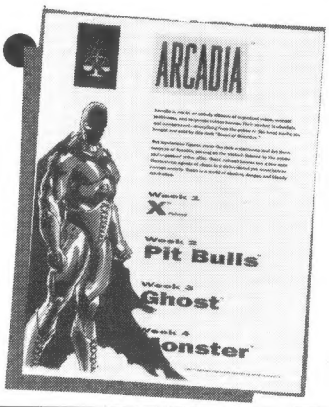
Continuity will publish two preview comics issued as a pack: *Megalith #0* and *Hybrids #0* which can be claimed if you order all six of the April *Deathwatch 2000: Preview* titles: *Armor 1*, *Hybrids 1*, *Megalith 1*, *Earth 4 1*, *Ms. Mystic 1* and *Cyberrad 1*. All six titles continue the story through May, and will include 1 of 11 trading cards. 200 coupons are being randomly inserted through the run which can be redeemed for a free poster-sized *She Bat* lithograph signed by Continuities head, and *Deathwatch* writer, Neal Adams.

DC'S YEAR OF CHANGE

Billed as 'The Year of Change', DC's latest editorial presentation has announced a vast number of new titles to be published in the second half of 1993 and the first quarter of 1994, including:

T WORLD

The sixteen titles are, in order of publication: *X*, *Pit Bulls*, *Ghost*, *Monster*, *Rebel*, *Mecha*, *Titan*, *Catalyst: Agents of Change*, *Barb Wire*, *The Machine*, *Wolf Gang*, *Motorhead*, *Division 13*, *Hero Zero*, *King Tiger*, and *Vortex*. The creators include Adam Hughes, Art Adams, Chris Warner, George Perez, James O'Barr, Jan Duursema, Jerry Ordway, Matt Wagner, Paul Chadwick, Paul Gulacy, Walt Simonson, and Frank Miller. It will be interesting to see exactly how much notice anyone takes of Dark Horse trade-marking the letter 'X'.



Aquaman Year One: Time and Tide, the long-awaited origin story by Peter David, Kirk Jarvinen & Brad Vancata, now scheduled for September, which will lead into a new ongoing monthly by the same team, due 1994.

Blackmask by Brian Augustyn & Jim Baikie, a Raymond Chandler meets Jim Thomson meets superheroes adventure featuring a fifties masked vigilante. Over the three issues Dan Cady, the man behind the mask, finds he's becoming as ruthless as the criminals he stalks.

Black Lightning is a revived ongoing title from December by Tony Isabella & Eddy Newell in which reluctant hero schoolteacher, Jefferson Pierce, decides to clean up Brick City and forms an uneasy alliance with the head of a street gang.

Bob the Galactic Bum by Alan Grant, John Wagner & Carlos Ezquerra is a 4-issue series for 1994 starring a down and out philosopher who ventures through the galaxy with his partner, Buck Fifty, unwittingly embroiling themselves in a hunt by Lobo, Stealth and a deranged horde of Khund assassins.

Captain Stone and the Dinosaurs, a 64-page one-shot is scheduled for December; by Charlie Santino, Val Semeiks & John Dell, Captain Stone, is a security officer who has to lead a compliment of scientists and terrorists through the past when their time-travelling ship is sabotaged.

Chain Gang War by John Wagner, Dave Johnson & John Dell is an ongoing series in the tradition of **Die Hard** with three vigilantes stalking the streets of New York, dragging their captives to the House of Correction, and themselves stalked by a police detective and a woman journalist. The first issue ships 11 May

Doctor Mid-Night is a 3-issue series for 1994 by Matt Wagner & John K. Snyder III reviving the Golden Age superhero from the 1940s: Dr. Pieter Cross is a medical whiz kid who, as the result of an accident, can see in the infrared.

The Golden Age by James Robinson & Paul Smith, which we previewed way back in issue 3 is now scheduled for September, a look at – not surprisingly – what happened to the Golden Age heroes when times began to change.

Hawkman returns in July in an ongoing series by John Ostrander, Jan Duursema & Rick Magyar, wearing a new costume, with new weapons, new powers and a new attitude. In the first six-issue storyline he has to track down the killer of Hawkwoman, Count Viper.

The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy is a three issue adaptation of Douglas Adam's five book trilogy, the story of Arthur Dent, the destruction of Earth and the search for the answers to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything. John Carnell & Steve Leialoha join Arthur in October to find the answer, 42.

Killing Machine is a 3-issue series for 1994 by the legendary Gil Kane, a rebellious cybernetic agent for the government searching for a peaceful life – only his handlers can't allow an uncontrollable combat machine to roam free, and risk sending in a newer, improved model.

Lobo: A Contract on Gawd, a 4-issue series starts in November by Alan Grant, Kieron Dwyer & Klaus Janson; around the same time an ongoing series entitled **Lobo: PG-13** by Grant, Val Semeiks & Karl Kesel begins, plus a one-shot **Lobo Gallery** by various artists. Add two trade paperback collections, **Lobo's Back** in August and **Infanticide** in October, and it's going to be a fraggin', stompin', hackin' year for DC's bastich bounty hunter.

Metal Men by Mike Carlin, Dan Jurgens & Brett Breeding will be a new 4-issue series for 1994 starring Dr. Will Magnus and his creations, Gold, Iron, Lead, Mercury, Tin and Platinum. Their origin was set up by John Byrne in **Superman**, and their latest nemesis may lead them to the truth about their beginnings.

Metamorpho is a fast-paced 4-part adventure series by Mark Waid & Graham Nolan centring on the Silver Age hero of the title and his relationships with his son, his ex-wife and her brutish husband, and his fight to save his offspring from a ghastly condition he has inadvertently passed on.

Nine Princes in Amber by Terry Bisson, Louis Harrison & Bryn Barnard is a 3 issue adaptation of the novels by Roger Zelazny, and a regular on DC's forthcoming lists. It's now scheduled for 1994.

The Outsiders are relaunched in November in an ongoing series by Mike W. Barr & Vince Russell in which the Outsiders are unjustly hunted for crimes against humanity. Geo-Force, Katana and Halo are joined by three new members, Misfit, Technocrat and Faust.

Plastic Man is a 208 page trade paperback reprint of Jack Cole's classic strip from the early 1940s, released in early 1994 to take advantage of the planned Steven Spielberg movie.

Another old character returns in **The Power of Shazam!**, a hardcover graphic novel written and drawn by Jerry Ordway, and updating the Golden Age superhero, explaining why Billy Batson was chosen to

Continued on page 8

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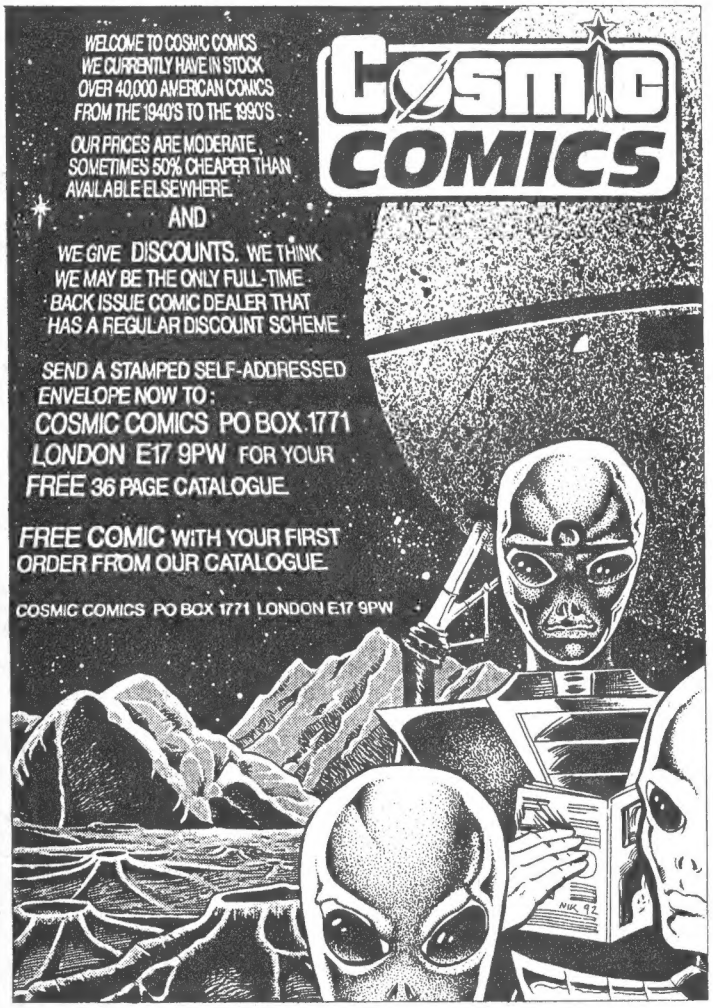
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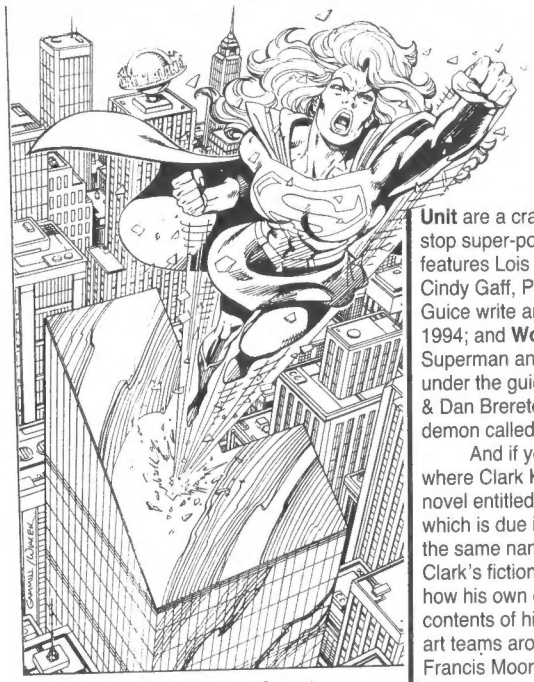
DC's YEAR OF CHANGE



become the legendary Captain Marvel, and laying the groundwork for an ongoing series.

Not a new title, but **Legends of the Dark Knight** will see stories by Russ Heath, Bret Blevins, Arthur Ranson, and Mike McMahon in the near future.

Catwoman will be getting her own ongoing series care of Jo Duffy & Jim Balent in September.

And following the events of **Robin III**, both **Robin** and **The Huntress** will be getting ongoing titles of their own in December with Chuck Dixon at the helm of both. Michael Netzer is lined up to pencil the latter, with Bob Smith inking both. Robin also stars in **Tragedy and Triumph**, collecting 8 Tim Drake episodes as a trade paperback.

Man-Bat, the Jamie Delano/ John Bolton collaboration has been pushed back to 1994, a 3-issue prestige format monthly.

And the long awaited **Batman/ Grendel** crossover is finally to see the light of day in 1993, by Matt Wagner and featuring the original incarnation of Wagner's popular creation, Hunter Rose. This will be a 2-issue series, co-published with Comico.

Meanwhile, Superman continues to create a stir despite all the 'is he, isn't he' arguments. Whilst new heroes take his place in the regular titles, **Supergirl** gets her own ongoing series in July thanks to Roger Stern, June Brigman & Jackson Guice – see what happens when Supergirl gets wise to Lex Luthor!

Spinning off from the Superman saga will be **The Guardians of Metropolis** in 1994, a 4-issue mini-series by Karl Kesel & Kieron Dwyer, a previously unrevealed story of the team up between the Newsboy Legion and the Boy Commandos; **Star Corps**, shipping September, is by Dan Vado, Norman Felchle & Trevor Scott, a 6-issue series in which a computer malfunction creates a new super-team, one each for the first 5 issues with the sixth seeing them join forces; **Metropolis Special Crimes Unit** are a crack team of experts out to stop super-powered menaces, and features Lois Lane and Superman. Cindy Gaff, Pete Krause & Jackson Guice write and draw the 4 issues for 1994; and **World's Finest II** teams up Superman and Batman once more under the guidance of Walt Simonson & Dan Brereton for a battle with a demon called Tullus.

And if you were wondering where Clark Kent was, he's writing a novel entitled **Under A Yellow Sun** which is due in August. The comic of the same name mixes two stories, Clark's fictional political thriller, and how his own daily routine affects the contents of his novel; it also mixes two art teams around a story by John Francis Moore – Eduardo Barreto illustrates the novel, and Kerry Gammill & Dennis Janke the daily grind of writing.

VERTIGO

All the regular titles continue, with two trade hardback and paperback collections of Sandman, **A Game of You** and **Fables and Reflections** due in May and September respectively. Other changes include the arrival of Linda Medley as regular penciller on **Doom Patrol** and the release of a **Hellblazer Special**.

American Freaks by Dave Louapre & Vince Locke reveals to 24 year-old Damien Kane that he is a failed experiment, a freak, an Un-Man. Based on the creatures from the pages of **Swamp Thing**, the six-issue series follows Kane's exploration of his past, and his quest for some kind of peace to his haunted existence (1994).

Black Orchid by Dick Foreman & Jill Thomson begins with journalist Walt Maddocks investigating the mysterious plant/human hybrid Orchid, who is being pursued by a criminal information organisation called Logos. The plot moves through South America's rain forests and back to America, the ongoing series resolving some of the loose ends left by Neil Gaiman & Dave McKean's mini-series. McKean will be painting covers from the debut in August 1993.

Blood and Shadows by Joe R. Lansdale & Mark A. Nelson is a 4-issue series from October 1993, featuring the God of Razors, a demon from another dimension who has cut a swath through the past and present, and attempts to corrupt a female police officer in the far future.

Chiaroscuro by Pat McGreal, Dave Rawson & Chas Truog is a psychological mystery starring Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Lorenzo de Medici and other historical characters from 15th Century Italy in a ten-issue series beginning late 1993.

Ghostdancing is an apocalyptic horror story in 6 issues by Jamie Delano & Richard Case for 1994; the dance is the Hopi Indian practice performed to remake the world, the theme of the story centred on the conflict between the natural and supernatural.

Goddess by Garth Ennis & Phil Winslade is rescheduled for 1994, an 8-issue series about Rosie Nolan whose violently emerging paranormal powers attract the attentions of an obsessed CIA agent and a corrupt British police officer.

The Heart of the Beast is a one-shot by Dean Motter & Sean Phillips; Victor, a man created 150 years ago, tries to survive in modern day New York, loved by a struggling young actress, Sandra, who tries to discover his secrets. The answer horrifies her.

Jonah Hex: Two-Gun Mojo revives the 1970s western character, this time with the horrors slant provided by Joe R. Lansdale, Tim Truman & Sam Glanzman for a five issue series beginning in June. Set in the post-Civil War town of Mud Creek, the hideously scarred Hex fights zombies and a creature called the Mojo Man.

The Last One is a six issue series by J.M. DeMatteis & Dan Sweetman, the magical being of the title having walked the Earth long before mankind. Now he is the last immortal, old beyond imagination, and tired beyond conception. The first issue ships 1 June.

The Mystery Play is a one-shot for late 1993, written by Grant Morrison with painted art by Jon J. Muth, a mystery set in a small English community where an actor playing God in a festival is murdered.

The Rites of Alchemy by Dick Foreman & Paul Johnson is the 12-issue story of Wesley Cale, drawn into an ancient feud between a mysterious 'High Initiate', an order of immortal alchemists, and a band of rebel immortals.

Scarab by John Smith & Scot Eaton is an ongoing series for September, the guardian of the darker corners of the DC universe back in the Golden Age, unseen since his traumatic defeat and the loss of his wife in 1949. He returns when he learns that he may be able to find his wife after over 40 years, to face a bizarre cast of menaces.

Shadows Fall by John Ney Reiber & John Van Fleet is a 6-issue urban horror series due in October about Warren Gale, an 18 year-old who found himself without a shadow. Years later, the unbound shadow is connected with a wave of suicides, and Warren has to struggle to save his soul.

Skin Graft by Jerry Prosser & Warren Pleece, is a 4-issue series debuting 18 May, a meeting of two imprisoned men – the young John Oakes who wants to get out and start a new life, and Abel Tarrant, the original Tattooed Man, who has plans of his own. As the story unfolds, Oakes finds himself stalking a killer who collects human skins.

Witchcraft, scripted by Alisa Kwitney and James Robinson with various artists including Matt Wagner, Steve Yeowell and Michael Zuli, is a three issue cycle set in different time periods ranging from medieval history to modern day London.

Vertigo Visions is a series of 64-page one-shots, beginning with **The Phantom Stranger** by Alisa Kwitney & Guy David in October, which gives a tantalising glimpse of his never-before-revealed past.

Family Values is a Vertigo crossover that will run through **Swamp Thing Annual 7**, **Animal Man Annual 1**, **Black Orchid Annual 1**, **Doom Patrol Annual 2**, **Tim Hunter Annual 1** and two bookend specials entitled **Family Values**, written by Neil Gaiman, and telling the story of a madman and his goal of indoctrinating children with his sterile vision of 'perfect' childhood. The story reintroduces the dead schoolboys Roland and Paine from **Sandman 25**, now running an unsuccessful detective agency, who set out to warn and protect some of the world's more unusual children. The first bookend appears in October.

PIRANHA

Brooklyn Dreams by J.M. DeMatteis & Glenn Barr, a 6" by 9" b/w four issue mini-series, exploring the memories of Vincent Carl Santini, looking back at the pivotal years, discovering new meanings and insight into his life (late 1993).

Factoid Books: A series of large size (9" by 12") collections of bizarre and outrageous true facts and stories, written and drawn by various creators. Titles will include **The Big Book of Death** by Bronwyn Carlson, **The Big Book of Crime and Punishment** by Robert Loren Fleming, **The Big Book of Conspiracies** by Lou Stathis & Judy McGuire, **The Big Book of Weirdos** by various (all due 1993), **The Big Book of Urban Legends** by Doug Moench, and **The J.F.K. Choose An Assassination Conspiracy Theory Book** by Steven Grant (both due 1994).

Prince: Three Chains of Gold is a follow up to the popular 1991 release, written by Dwayne McDuffie, with art by Joe Rubenstein, taking Prince and his band to the Middle East in the Summer of 1993.

Tree of Life by Elliot S. Maggin & Randy DuBurke is set in the 27th Century in a galaxy dominated by a genetic aristocracy, with Jewish people living in orbiting 'shtetls' (villages); Rabbi Michael Paley and a student David Kronin escape in a liferaft when their shtetl is attacked, and may be the last Jews alive.

ANGOULEME '93

This year, 'The Town of Images' celebrated the twentieth anniversary of one of Europe's largest comic festivals. Set up in 1973 by Francis Groux, Jean Mardikian and Claude Moliterni, it was a small affair which grew rapidly, until it now plays host to over 300,000 people every year. Nearly every 'Grand Prix' winner returned to pay homage, including Moebius, Tardi, Eisner, Franquin, Bilal and Cabanes.

Last year's winners, Frank Margerin and Morris (the creator of Lucky Luke) had large exhibitions, the latter including a full size stagecoach, cowboys, indians, and a Lucky Luke lookalike.

Germany was the guest country, following in the footsteps of Spain, Britain, Japan and America. Other exhibitions included retrospectives of Lorenzo Mattotti and Matthias Schultheiss.

At the Alph Art awards, tributes were made to the artists and writers who had died in the past twenty years. Those honoured included: Peyo (creator of the Smurfs), Bob de Moor (Herge's assistant) and Goscinny (creator and writer of Asterix).

This year's awards went to:

Alph Art Coup de Couer (Publishers Choice): ***Le Bar Du Vieux Francais*** by Stassen 7 Lampiere

Best Humour Book: ***Raymond Calbuth (Book 4)*** by Tronchet

Best Writer/Story: ***Saigon-Hanoi*** by Cosey

Best Foreign Book: ***Maus II*** by Art Spiegelman

Best French Book: ***Jack (The Adventures of Basil and Victoria Book 2)*** by Edith & Yann

Best Fanzine: ***Jade*** by Jerome Sie & various

Best Children's Book (Voted by children): ***Nabuchodinaure "Chronicle of Prehistory" De Windenlocher*** by Herle.

The **Grand Prix** went to **Gerard Lauzier**, a very controversial choice, and a special prize was made for **Harvel Kurtzman** who will receive his award later in the year.

Tim Pilcher

★★★ US NEWSBRIEF ★★★

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

Cerebus 0 **gathers together all the previously uncollected Cerebus issues, including numbers 51, 112-113 and 137-138, as a 96 page softcover. The first printing will retail at $3.25, has a gold ink logo and comes pre-bagged with a Cerebus hologram card; the $2.75 version has a colour cover and no bag or card.**

Mothers and Daughters 1 **is another brick sized reprint, offered through direct sale for the first time and again available in two printings, a $25 for a signed, numbered edition, and $17 for the unsigned version**

DARK HORSE

April launches from Dark Horse include Pat Mills' ***Sex Warrior***, **co-written by Tony Skinner with art by Mike McKone & John Erasmus, set in the the final years of the 21st century after Earth has been ravaged by the Age War. The chronos-hormone has unlocked the secrets of eternal life, but only to the rich; only the Sex Warrior, Dakini, can unite youthful rebels against the ruling Wrinklies.**

A demon has set up a home on Earth in ***Redblade*** **by Vince Giarrano, but Redblade and his companions, Vena and Tull, are out for blood.**

Aliens: Rogue **is a 4-parter by Ian Edginton & Will Simpson – and you can find out more about it later this issue!**

Concrete: Eclectica **is a new two-parter by Paul Chadwick featuring new Concrete and non-Concrete stories.**

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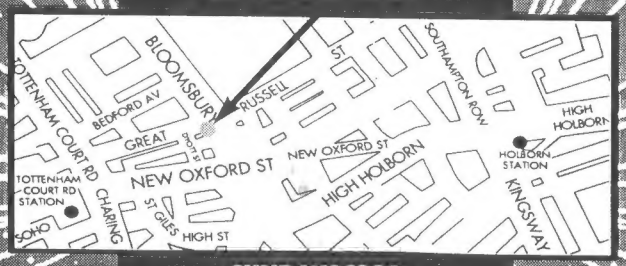

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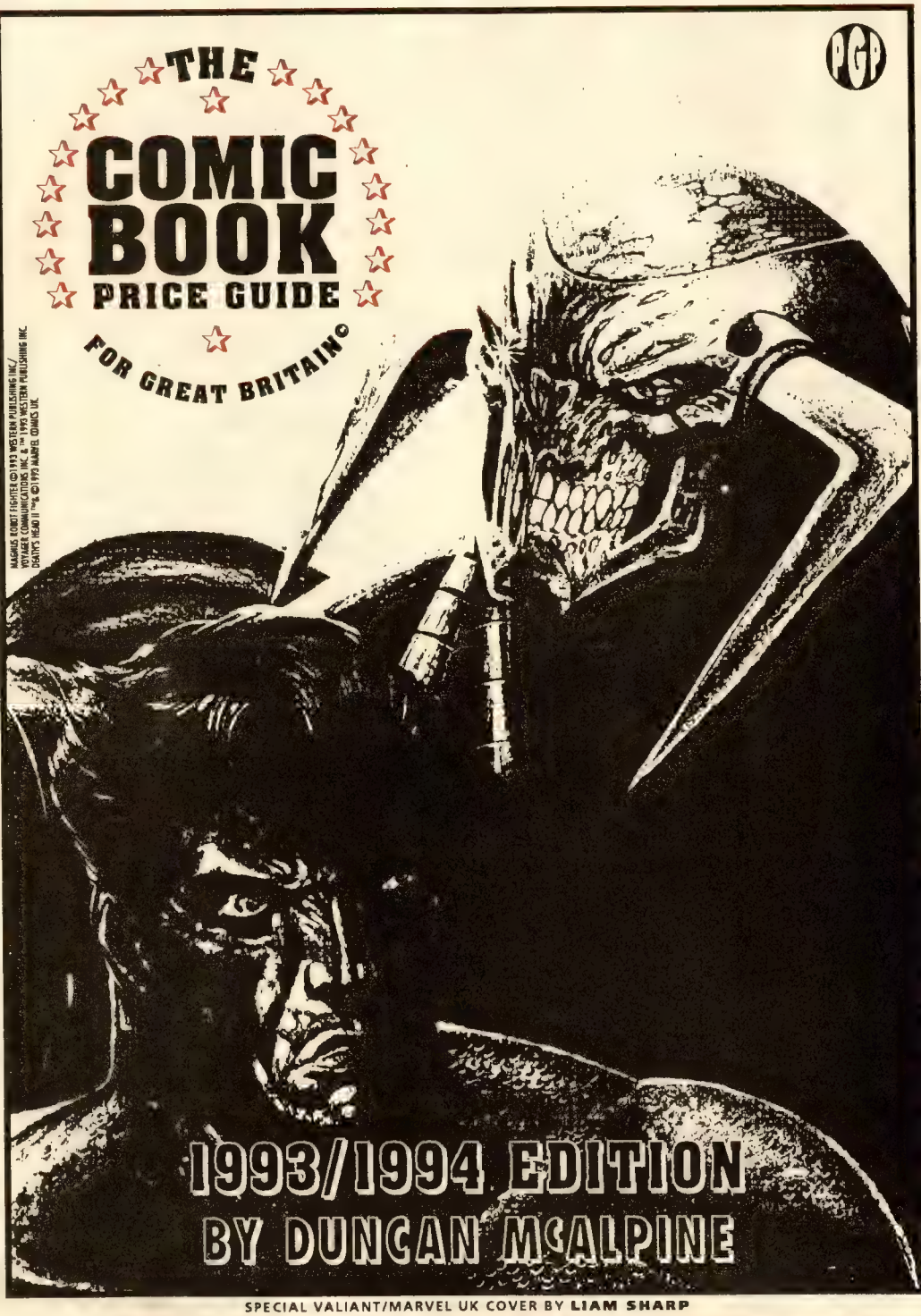

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★★ US ★★ NEWSBRIEF

HARRIS COMICS

Harris will be publishing a three-issue series based on the adventures of *Ultraman*, a TV series which has run both as live-action and animated cartoon for 27 years in Japan, and first appeared in America in 1970. The series is written by Dwayne (Milestone Media) McDuffie and pencilled by Ernie Colon, with inks over the 3 issues provided by Alfredo Alcala, Bob Wiacek and Terry Austin respectively. The covers are by Ken Steacy, and will be published without logos or text – that will appear on the polybag which will also stop the trading cards falling out.

In May they launch *Frank*, a modern and graphic 4-issue rendering of the classic Mary Shelley character, Frankenstein, written by Dan Chichester and drawn by Denys Cowan, another Milestone member.

IMAGE

Alan Moore's *1963* is launched with the first issue of *Mystery Incorporated 1*, billed as 'America's Most Exciting Comic Book' and featuring Crystalman, The Planet, Neon Queen and Kid Dynamo, a quartet of characters who will seem strangely familiar to anyone over 30. Yes, it's the return of four-colour heroes, with art by Rick Veitch & Dave Gibbons.

Bloodstrike 1 is a prelude to 'Blood Brothers', by Rob Liefeld, Dan Fraga & Danny Miki, introducing Cabbot, Deadlock, Fourplay, Shogun and Tag, five unstoppable killing machines in the pay of the government. This issue leads into a the Blood Brothers storyline in *Brigade 1*, as the title returns as a regular series.

Jim Lee draws *Deathblow 1* set during Desert Storm where the eponymous hero finds himself assigned to a CIA special ops team with orders to assassinate Saddam. Writer Brandon Choi also pens the flip story, 'Cybernary'.

Phantom Force 1 is the long-awaited return of Jack Kirby, a 3-issue series pencilled by 'the King' and inked by Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, Erik Larsen & Scott Williams in which Phantom Force infiltrate a secret government facility to steal back the antidote to a deadly plague.

Spawn 12 is the Frank Miller issue. What more needs to be said?

MALIBU

Walter Koenig – best known as Chekov from *Star Trek*, but also the author of film scripts and a couple of books – adds another string to his bow when he scripts the new 3-issue *Raver*. Raver is the alter-ego of Norman Walters who creates worlds and monsters which only the powerful Raver can overcome – if he doesn't, Norman ceases to exist. Dan and David Day provide the artwork and the direct market edition has a prism enhanced cover.

METAL MAMMOTH

Tundra release *Heavy Metal Hardware* under their Metal Mammoth imprint, a 112 page companion to *Heavy Metal* magazine and featuring 'Max Carnage' by Dave Elliott & Simon Bisley, a *Mad Max* style cyborg. Bisley is also the artist for the 5-page 'Kyrn'. 'Rogue Trooper: War Machine' by Dave Gibbons & Will Simpson is reprinted from the pages of *2000AD*. And to round

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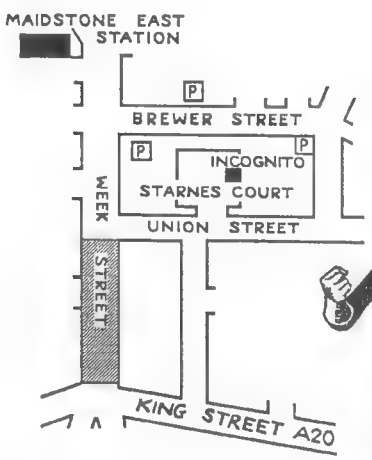

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- **FUNDRAISING AUCTION:** The artwork produced for the special convention booklet will be auctioned with proceeds going to various charties.
- **COSTUME PARADE: There will be loadsa great prizes for the best costumes. Everyone who enters will receive a £10 refund! Changing rooms will be provided.**

REGISTRATION
You should receive your convention entrance badge within two weeks of applying. **IMPORTANT:** If you have not received your entrance badge by **Friday April 16 1993** contact us immediately, preferably including a telephone number where you can be contacted.
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★★ US ★★ NEWSBRIEF

things off, there's a 'Zirk' story by Pedro Henry & John Higgins, and a gatefold cover by Bisley.

VALIANT

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter is the start of an ongoing series for the character who made his reappearance in *Magnus Robot Fighter 12*, written by Dave Michelinie and with pencils by Bart Sears. The story continues from the pages of *X-O Manowar* wherein Turok began his battle with the Binosaurs, only to find they are also trapped in the future. The cover is a chromium/embossed – same as *Bloodshot* – and because of the manufacturing process this requires, the issue will be printed to order.

MARVEL NEWS

X-MEN ANNIVERSARY

The 30th birthday of Xavier's mutant teams begins in *X-Factor 92*, shipping 11 May, a 48-page special with a wraparound hologram cover by series artist, Joe Quesada. Written by Scott Lobdell, the story kicks off with Fabien Cortez attempting to befriend Quicksilver. Suspicious behaviour, the clue coming from the title of this anniversary crossover, 'The Return of Magneto'. The package includes an additional 16 page 30th Anniversary Preview with details on forthcoming X-related titles, *Deadpool*, *Sabretooth* and the *X-Men/Avengers* team-up.

The story continues through the pages of *X-Force 25* in June, and monthly thereafter in *Uncanny X-Men 304*, *X-Men 25*, *Wolverine 75* and *Excalibur 72*.

MARVEL ROUND-UP

The latest quarterly title in the new Unlimited range, *2099 Unlimited*, shipping 4 May, introduces the origin of the Hulk 2099, plus a back-up wherein Spider-Man 2099 tackles a new costumed supervillain, The Mutagen.

Moebius' *Airtight Garage*, previously only available as a collected edition, is now to be published as a 4-part comic book by Epic, a classic, often surrealistic science fiction adventure which Marvel enthusiastically suggest retailers display alongside *Guardians of the Galaxy* or *Warlock and the Infinity Watch*. I'm speechless.

The Warlock Chronicles is a new *Warlock and Infinity Watch* series in which Adam Warlock is thrown out of our universe and forced to fight desperately to get back. The first five issues tie-up themes touched on in the recent *Infinity Crusade*, retelling Warlock's origin in the process. Jim Starlin, Tom Raney, Keith Williams, and a holo-grafx, embossed cover combine forces on 4 May.

Offcastes is the latest in Epic's Heavy Hitters line, written and drawn by Mike Vosburg, in which an elite class rule fourteen satellite worlds from Earth, enjoying privileges lowly satellite 'otherworlders' are denied. Zak, a half-breed Earthling/offworlder travels with his uncle, Grant, to the colonised worlds, to become embroiled in an assassination. The 3-issue series debuts 11 May.

The second Heavy Hitter debut, on 18 May, is a 4-parter, *Spyke*, by Mike Baron & Bill Reinhold, the story of a security guard who accidentally kills a man, which somehow sends him into another dimension – and the only way back is to kill the person who functions as the porthole to this world. Only thing is, Spyke doesn't know who he is.

And, thirdly, there's *Feud*, shipping 25 May, by Mike Baron & Mark Nelson, a 4-issue series set on Smithback, a planet divided by four warring city-states: the Grunts, the Skids, the Kites and the Stokers. When the Kites kidnap the heir to one of the kingdoms it starts a brutal war.

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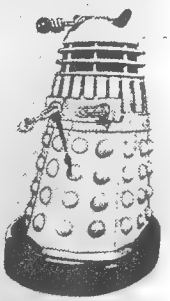

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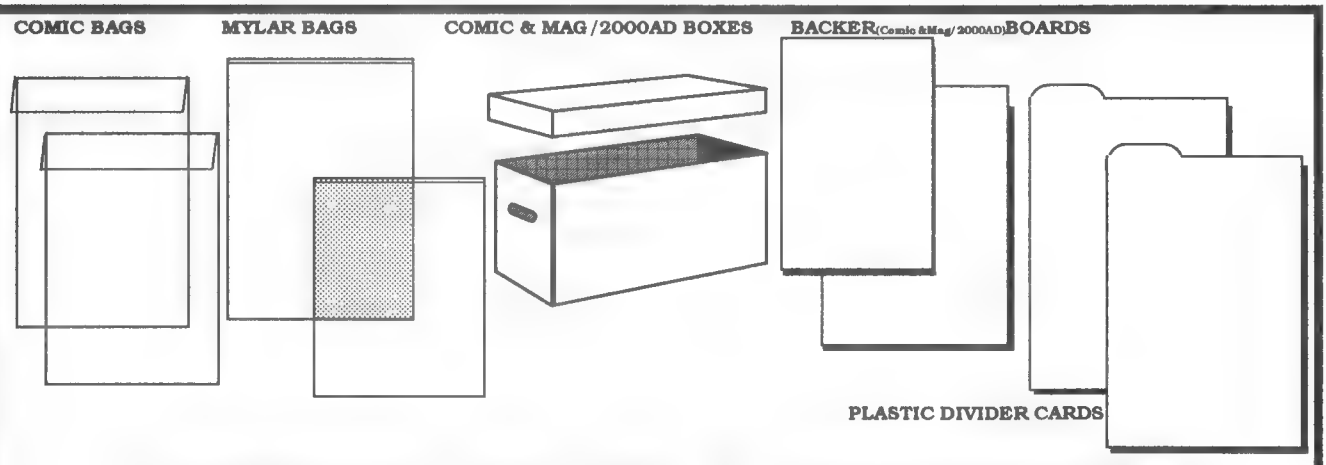

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BRITISH NEWS

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THE FINAL WHISTLE

The long-running *Roy of the Rovers* comic announced its closure amongst much media attention about the fate of Melchester Rovers star, Roy Race. The hero of the longest running UK comic adventure strip, notching up 39 years of continuous play, made his debut on the cover of the new boys' weekly, *Tiger*, on 11 September 1954, scoring the first of over 5000 goals. The strip was created by Frank Pepper & Joe Colquhoun, although it has been written and drawn by many artists over the years.

Roy's rise to player/manager was punctuated by some major events – he was appointed captain in 1958, won the FA Cup in 1961, managed England in the 1970s, married his girlfriend, Penny, in 1976 – they have three children including Roy 'Rocky' junior, Melinda and Diana; 1981 was his worst year, with the team demoted to the second division, Penny left him, and he was shot by TV actor Elton Blake; he quit to join Walford Rovers in 1983, to return later, and rebuilt his team in 1986 when a terrorist bomb killed many of his team-mates.

The strip continued to appear in *Tiger* until 1985, although Roy has already transferred to his own title in 1976 where his adventures have continued ever since.

A decline in sales over the past decade from a peak of 200,000 to under 30,000 (*Tiger* peaked at over 300,000) has led to the cancellation. Editor David Hunt said that the last issue, dated 20 March, will see Roy suffer a tragic off-field accident which will end his career, although it is hoped that fans and supporters will be kept in touch through a monthly publication, beginning in May, concentrating on his son, Rocky, now aged 16. A newspaper strip in the *Daily Star* should continue unabated.

UK NEWSBRIEF

GLASGOW '93

The fourth Glasgow Comic Art Convention will be held the weekend of April 24 and 25, once again at the City Hall, Candleriggs. The price remains £10 if booked in advance, or £7.50 per day on the door. Confirmed guests include Jim Shooter, John Ostrander, Archie Goodwin, Kim Yale, from the States, and from the UK Dougie Braithwaite, Jamie Delano, Steve Dillon, Peter Doherty, Garth Ennis, Gary Erskine, Glenn Fabry, Mark Farmer, Duncan Fegredo, Alan Grant, Paul Johnson, Colin MacNeil, Pete Milligan, Kev O'Neill, Sean Phillips, Steve Pugh, Will Simpson, John Smith and Nick Vince – and at least 20 others.

The organisers, Rusty Staples, can offer discounted hotel accommodation and coach travel in some cases, and inform us that the money raised at this years charity auction will be split between the Glasgow Head Injuries Trust and Help the Aged.

If you want further information, contact The Glasgow Comic Art Convention, PO Box 146, Glasgow G1 5RN. Make sure you include an SAE.

ATOMEKA

Tundra UK are on the move again, which has caused a number of delays to the schedule. At present we have heard of no cancellations to announced titles, and will bring you more news as it comes.

DARK HORSE

Dark Horse UK launch another new title on 16 March, entitled *Total Carnage*, gathering together some of the US stories into one 48 page, £1.50 magazine. *Batman vs Predator*, *Army of Darkness*, *Grendel* and *The Mask* will be serialised, and a free rub-on tattoo is given away.

***Aliens #10* includes 'Predator: Rite of Passage', a two-parter by Ian Edginton & Rick Leonardi, and the start of *Aliens: Tribes* by Steve Bissette & Dave Dorman.**

Issue 4 of *Dracula* will introduce a new strip, 'Vampirella' by Archie Goodwin & Tom Sutton, the sexy alien vampire from the 1970s Warren mags. Issue 5 concludes the Topps movie adaptation, and features a one-off story with art by fantasy book cover master, Frank Frazetta.

***Star Wars #7* sees no less than three new series: 'The Bounty Hunter of Ord-Mantell' is a *Classic Star Wars* reprint by Archie Goodwin & Al Williamson, the first 'Tales of the Jedi' by Rick Veitch & Janine Johnston, and a new Indiana Jones yarn – 'The Shrine of the Sea Devil'.**

FLEETWAY

The new year has brought with it news of a variety of cancellations and launches. Top of the media attention list is *Roy of the Rovers* (see elsewhere), although the axe has also fallen on three planned titles, *Alternity*, *Oh No!*, and *Glory, Glory*. There is, however, a new fortnightly title in the works which we will bring you news of when it comes out from wraps. We can reveal, however, that it is NOT titled *The Pedarist*.

Just launched is *Batman Adventures*, a new monthly, on 6 March, complete with free badge. Other DC licensed comics are also to be relaunched, The *Batman Monthly* towards the end of the month and *Superman* in April. The *Batman Special* will continue as a quarterly.

Another new release is *The Best of 2000AD Special Edition* on 3 April, featuring a new cover by the combined talents of Mike McMahon, Kev O'Neill and Ian Gibson. Priced £1.95, it contains 132 pages – over 90 in colour – of classic *2000AD* stories, many of them never previously reprinted.

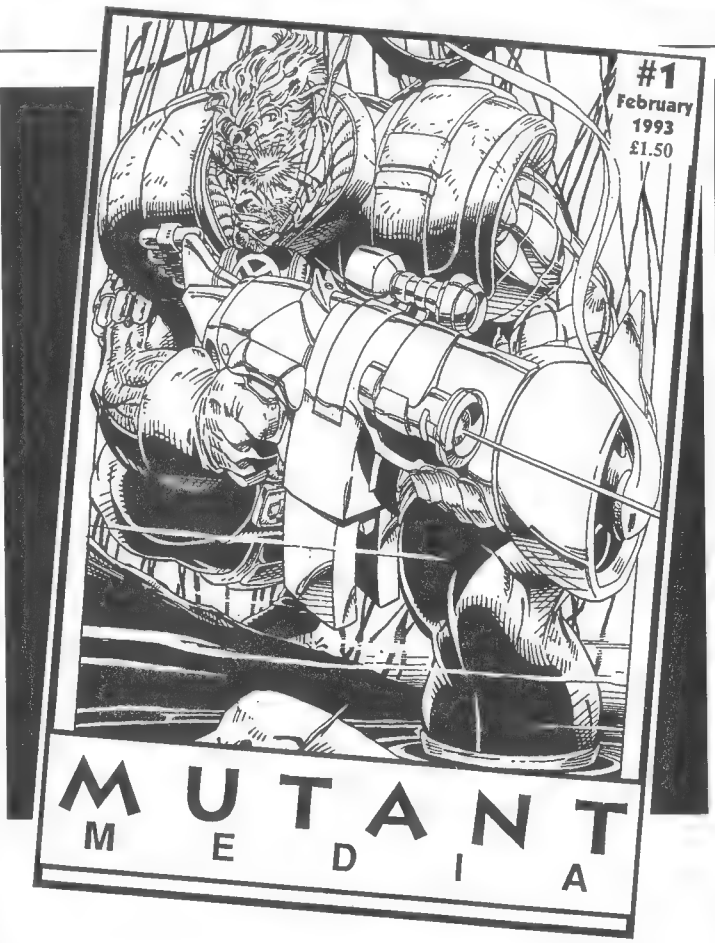
Meanwhile, over at the *Megazine*, 'Al's Baby' and 'Anderson: The Jesus Syndrome' conclude in issue 24, replaced by a Hershey two-parter by Robbie Morrison & Siku in 25 entitled 'Asylum', plus the Reader's Survey results. 26 will cover feature Devlin Waugh meets Dredd in a thrusting one-off with carefully placed word balloons entitled 'Brief Encounter', all leading up to the free-gift issue 27.

KNOCKABOUT

'Not Quite Music! Not Quite Sane!' is the billing for Gilbert Shelton's *Not Quite Dead*, his first new creation in two decades. Not Quite Dead are a band with a combined playing experience of 600 years but they've still to put together a demo tape. Their first gig was in the pages of *Rip Off Comics 19* in 1988, but this is the band's first comic book, 32 pages of small club gigs and unscrupulous promoters from the creator of the Freak Brothers.

LION PUBLISHING

The second volume of the Legends of Larian, *The Cutting Edge*, by Terry Murray & Jeff Anderson, the follow up to last years *The Shadow's Edge*, will be published on 26 March, priced £3.99.



MARVEL

For the full low-down on *Shadow Riders*, read this month's feature. Issue one is due to ship 6 April. Marvel promise two new titles for May, *Warheads: Black Dawn*, a two-issue limited series written by newcomer Craig Houston with 'explicit pencils' by Charlie Adlard (it says here). The Warheads jump into a potential future Earth crawling with insatiable vampiric creatures. Morbius and Ghost Rider get in on the devastating action, shipping 11 May, and not all the Warheads will survive. The ongoing *Warheads* series will end with #14, and *Motormouth* with #13.

Cyberspace 3000 is an ongoing SF epic scheduled for 18 May. You'll find out more next month in an exclusive feature.

TITAN BOOKS

The Book of Alien by Paul Scanlon & Michael Gross is scheduled for 22 April, alongside the latest of Titan's Star Trek novels, *The Starship Trap* by Mel Gilden. A week earlier comes the graphic novel *The Star Lost*, a Next Generation story by Michael Jan Friedman, Peter Krause & Pablo Marcus.

UT PRODUCTIONS

Following the demise of *Ut*, and the abortive *Don't Have a Fit*, Sport Publication return with not one, but two new humour titles, both bi-monthly: *Kack* appeared in February, edited by Russ Carvell, and will alternate with *Gag*, edited by Kev Sutherland, both priced £1.00. Contributors include both Carvell and Sutherland, Lew Stringer, Paul Palmer and Bill Faber, and include characters like Masonic the Hedgehog, Elton's John, Peter Panhandle, and Dicken Fanny, the Hilarious Hermaphrodite.

Also from Kev is *Just Comix*, a newspaper supplement to the newspaper magazine *Just People*. A trial issue was run in December, and it will probably begin a weekly run in the spring.

ALIENS CONVENTION

The first Aliens Convention will take place at The Queensway Hall in Dunstable, Beds. on 18 April. The one day event will include talks, displays, question panels, interviews and a dealers room. This is your chance to get yourself photographed with a real 'live' alien! Tickets are priced £12 to members of the Aliens Fan Club, £15 to non-members and on the door. For more information write to Aliens Convention '93, PO Box 11, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 6YL. Same address will get you information on the AFC and their magazine, *Facehugger*.

MUTANT MEDIA

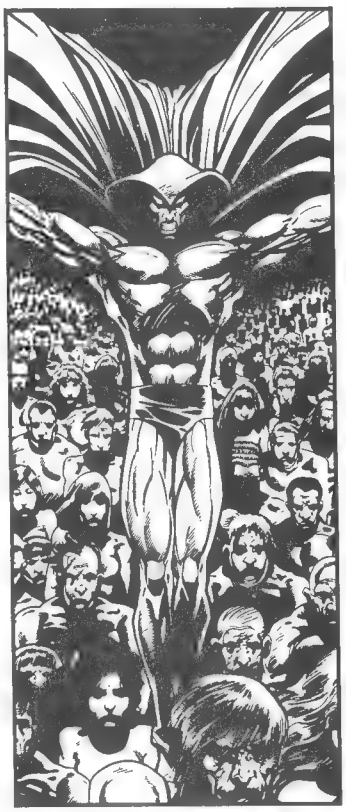
Phil Hall, *CW* contributor and head of Squonk publishing, has just released the first issue of *Mutant Media*, a 32-page A5 fanzine dedicated to everything connected with Marvel's genetically challenged characters. Interviews, checklists, comments – all available from Squonk Publishing, 3 Ashfield Road, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 3JG.

DC NEWS

BLOOD LINES

Elsewhere you'll have seen DC's forthcoming titles, but for May you'll be seeing the first in the *Bloodlines* crossover which will run through 23 Annuals, the last scheduled for 5 October. It begins on 4 May, the opening fusillade appearing in *Lobo Annual 1*; the initial wave will appear under the overall 'Outbreak' banner, including *Superman: The Man of Steel Annual 2* (11 May), *Batman: Shadow of the Bat Annual 1* (18 May), *Flash Annual 6* (25 May), *New Titans Annual 9* (1 June), *Superman Annual 5* (8 June), *Green Lantern Annual 2* (15 June), *Batman Annual 17* (22 June) and *Justice League International Annual 4* (29 June). The next two waves, 'Earth Plague' and 'Deathstorm' will be explored next month.

Bloodlines introduces an assortment of entirely new characters, and begins when a group of extraterrestrial, shape-shifting parasites crash-land on Earth in a living spaceship. Seven monsters emerge (designed by Art Adams) and quietly begin a series of grisly murders, feeding upon human spinal fluid. Some of the victims miraculously recover, only to find that they have gained paranormal powers; a New Breed of superheroes spontaneously arises across the world, attracting the long-established heroes, and a desperate struggle ensues as the aliens deadly biological agenda begins to bite. The battle lines are drawn.



KNIGHTFALL

The inmates of Arkham Asylum are on the loose: Mad Hatter, Poison Ivy, Scarecrow, Two-Face, The Joker...all free! The mayor wants Commissioner Gordon replaced, Batman is exhausted, overwhelmed, and waiting in the wings is Bane, ready to break Batman at the first chance he gets.

'Knightfall' runs through 19 chapters, beginning in *Batman 492* (16 March) and weaving through *Detective 659-666*, *Batman 493-500*, the latter shipping 17 August, and *Showcase '93 #7-8*. A three part story running in *Shadow of the Bat 16-18* will tie in to the 'Knightfall' storyline.

ROUND-UP

With all the cross-over excitement, the release of DC's plans for the next year and the 'Reign of the Supermen', it could be possible to miss some of the other interesting titles that are appearing. *Zatanna* is a 4-issue mini-series written by Lee Marrs and drawn by one of the world's most famous strip-artists, Esteban Maroto – best known in Europe and South America, but with plenty of fans in British speaking countries. Zatanna has been trying to live a quiet life since her ordeals in *The Books of Magic*, but strange dreams draw her back to her true calling, and she reveals the sheer power she is capable of, and confronts the man she holds responsible for the death of her father – John Constantine.

Streets 1 is being resolicited for publication on 25 May, and *Tell Me Dark*, previously only available as a hardcover, sees softcover publication on 1 June.

Sandman 51, shipping 18 May, sees the start of a new set of complete stories, this issue drawn by Alec Stevens, with a framing sequence drawn by Bryan Talbot.

SPOTLIGHT

"To make it in the market you need to have something special, don't you?" Steve Donovan quickly turns the tables on me when I call to ask him about *Mindbenders*, a new 170 page anthology title set for release in April 1993. His question comes in answer to my own query about the changes that have happened to the title since it was first announced in early 1992. At the time, *Mindbenders* was a 48 page, perfect bound monthly with a June release date.

The germination of *Mindbenders* took place in 1991 when Donovan returned to college on a creative writing course and became involved in a comic writing workshop. At the end of the course he was invited to produce a fanzine but, he says, "I saw the possibility of doing something more, something a bit better, so I started doing some background research." The end result was a disagreement with his co-producer on the fanzine: "He sacked me!

"I went on looking to do something myself, but thought 'Why do a fanzine? Why not do something on a national level?'. At the time the market was lacking some really good storytelling and some of the classic artwork – a lot of great artists weren't being used any more, so basically it started from there. We went through a lot of different stories and a lot of ideas got trashed, and more people came on board."

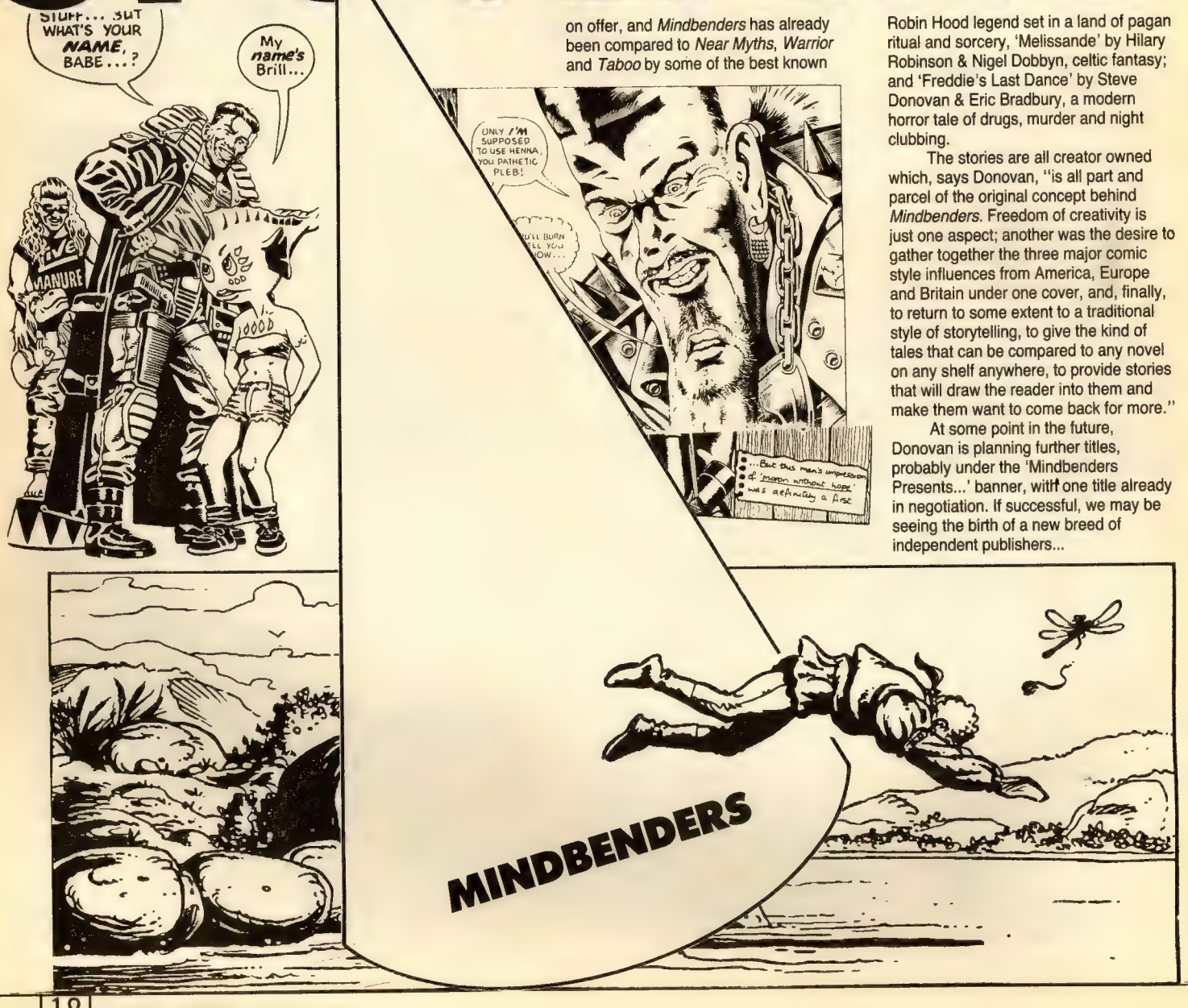
The initial idea was put to W.H. Smiths "but they said they'd take it if we printed 100,000 or something stupid like that, and the market wasn't there." A phone call to Diamond Distributors set them on a new path which was to lead eventually to the current anthology format, although even that title doesn't do full justice to the material contained in the blockbuster package.

Unlike most of it's competitors, *Mindbenders* is eight comics in one; many of the stories are set to run through several issues but are in excess of twenty pages per episode.

Another diversion from the normal anthology is the diversity of the material on offer, and *Mindbenders* has already been compared to *Near Myths*, *Warrior* and *Taboo* by some of the best known names in the industry. The contents range from science fiction and horror, through real life drama and fantasy, the stories including 'Man of Our Times' by John Donovan & Paul Scott, set in the 19th century but told through the memories of a drunken wretch some sixty years later; 'Gunren Falls' by Colin Stanford, described as "misadventures in the badlands of Atlantis" following a shipwrecked princess fighting a band of shapeshifters in a strange swampland; 'Tenochtitlan' by John Donovan & Dean Willets, a struggle between a modern day man and a man forging history in 1097; 'Pixl-A', by Bob Wakelin, set in the distant future in which virtually everything and everyone is plugged into monstrous computers run by corporate governments and the hackers at war with the state from within the microchip world; 'The Last Planet' by Simon Davies & David Pugh, in which a shoalin warrior tries to save her city from hedonistic destruction on a dying Earth; 'Lincoln Green' by Simon Davies & Ron Tiner, a reworking of the Robin Hood legend set in a land of pagan ritual and sorcery, 'Melissande' by Hilary Robinson & Nigel Dobbyn, celtic fantasy; and 'Freddie's Last Dance' by Steve Donovan & Eric Bradbury, a modern horror tale of drugs, murder and night clubbing.

The stories are all creator owned which, says Donovan, "is all part and parcel of the original concept behind *Mindbenders*. Freedom of creativity is just one aspect; another was the desire to gather together the three major comic style influences from America, Europe and Britain under one cover, and, finally, to return to some extent to a traditional style of storytelling, to give the kind of tales that can be compared to any novel on any shelf anywhere, to provide stories that will draw the reader into them and make them want to come back for more."

At some point in the future, Donovan is planning further titles, probably under the 'Mindbenders Presents...' banner, with one title already in negotiation. If successful, we may be seeing the birth of a new breed of independent publishers...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GEM OF THE MONTH?

Turok – no over-run

A little advance knowledge is a dangerous thing in this business, especially if you want to pre-empt the plethora of red blooded comic speculators that seem to inhabit every corner of shop, mart or convention.

In this incredibly strange business it actually becomes easier to spot a hot one the more warning you get of it, even if you don't know anything at all about it. Take *X-Men 2099* as a prime example: as the centrepiece of Marvel's 30th anniversary of the X-books they plan to unleash the future X-team in a new ongoing series in the late summer. The only problem is that they don't know who will write, draw or ink it. Joey Cavalieri, 2099 editor-in-chief says "It will be great!" How does he know? He doesn't even know what it will be about!

This has been a growing problem with comic companies since the inception of the direct sale market. It isn't likely to change and in many companies it will only get worse.

Comics solicited now for April and May release show us that both retailers, fans and speculators are all going to find it difficult to distinguish the real gems from the paste copies. There are many projects of high quality from all the major companies and quite a few of the minor ones, but few will become high value items because of high print runs!

Marvel and Epic are releasing no fewer than 18 issue #1s. Admittedly not all are ongoing series and, I suppose, we should be grateful for small mercies. Hot on the heels of the present 2099 series comes *2099 Unlimited*, another of Marvel's quarterly specials on high grade paper with low grade creative teams. Poor man's Peter David, Gerard Jones, will help create *Hulk 2099* as a more Jeckyl and Hyde character than his 1993 counterpart. One potential 2099 surprise could be the debut of Kelley Jones as regular penciller on *Spider-Man 2099* from issue 9; already a fan-favourite because of his work on *Batman: Red Rain* and *Aliens: Hive*, I would expect the reaction to his rendition of the future Spidey's adventures to be scolding.

Alien Legion returns in a 3 part story and, sadly, this bright spot in the Epic firmament will sell very poorly. When you consider that in the books near 10 year old history it has had such luminaries as Terry Austin, Frank Cirocco, Chris Warner, Whilce Portacio, Larry Stroman, Mark Farmer and Dan Panosian working on it, one finds it difficult to imagine why it hasn't found a wider audience. It's a sort of X-Men meets Sven Hassle in space, yet nowhere near as convoluted and it's a surprise in this age of the Hard-assed hero that Jugger Grimrod has not been greeted with Lobo-like attention.

In *Namor 40* we might just be seeing the last of Jae Lee's fine pencils for both the Savage Submariner and Marvel Comics: the news that he is to pencil Rob Liefeld's *Youngblood: Strikefile* will come as a shock to both Bob Harras and Namor's scripter and editor Terry Kavanagh who is hoping to schedule the new Iron Fist series.

Warlock and the Infinity Watch has been quite a success for both Marvel and retailers, back issues are selling strongly and the news that a second Warlock book was no surprise in these days of Marvel's diarrhoetic release schedule. While unlikely to set the world on fire in terms of financial gain, *Warlock Chronicles* is likely to eventually prove the more popular of the two books, as *Spirits of Vengeance* has overtaken *Ghost Rider* in sales.

X-Factor 92 kicks off the 30th anniversary celebrations with a bang and a likely rush for copies. Being the lowest selling of the X-books it was not unsurprising that during 'X-cutioners Song', *X-Factor* issues were the hardest to track down. The likelihood is that of all the celebratory issues, this will be the hardest to find and the nicest to look at. It will also have one of the most shocking endings in the X-books history!

Gary Frank is packing them in as *Hulk* artist and expect sales to get back up in the Keown league before long. Remember how difficult it is to find back issues of Keown's Greenskin.

Epic's *Heavy Hitters* don't really hit the target and one must feel that they are picking up the material that Image and Dark Horse didn't want. One possible exception, and I emphasise 'possible', is *Feud* by Mike Baron and Mark Nelson, which promises not to have a human being in sight.

DC spends most of their energy hyping the return of you-know-who, a stronger idea may have saved their bacon on this one. *Adventures of Superman 500* is a special cover comic, and we all know what happens to them nowadays.

Sandman reaches the half century with a self-contained special, which DC say will be an excellent starting point for new readers, with the news that Mike Mignola is to work on a 7-part story, and with so many loose ends lying around one must believe that Neil Gaiman intends to stay with the book for at least another year – and what good news that is. The *Tim Hunter* series from Vertigo shouldn't be seen as the death toll for his work on *Sandman* – Gaiman is only writing the first few issues, although artist John Ridgway has signed up for a year.

Milestone's *Icon* could be the surprise hit of the new year: rave reviews coupled with obvious retailer fear in ordering anything but the minimum for an untested product, we could have a live one!

Lobo returns in various different projects, but he is rapidly becoming old news.

The only positive word that can be said for Image comics at present is their own personal belief that they can produce the many books they solicit within a year of announcement. With only Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* achieving the desired frequency at present it's not surprising that it is the only one that is going up in value. Needless to say that all the releases will have enormous sales and have fanboys bristling with orgasmic rapture, but the Bratpack's unprofessional business acumen gives them a tarnished Image.

Valiant will though undoubtedly have the gem of the month with the release of *Turok 1*. Complete with full metal jacket, Valiant promise that the book will be to order only. Meaning that what is ordered will be what is printed, no over-runs at all. Amazing how this small Marvelesque company have stolen so much of the big boys thunder.

One final mention to Continuity Comics, who relaunch with the multi cross-over *Deathwatch 2000*. A company that actually have a lot of very talented people working for it, that can't compete with Valiant comics. Is there any significant reason why? Answers on a postcard to Neal Adams, Continuity Comics...

Feud – a heavy hit?

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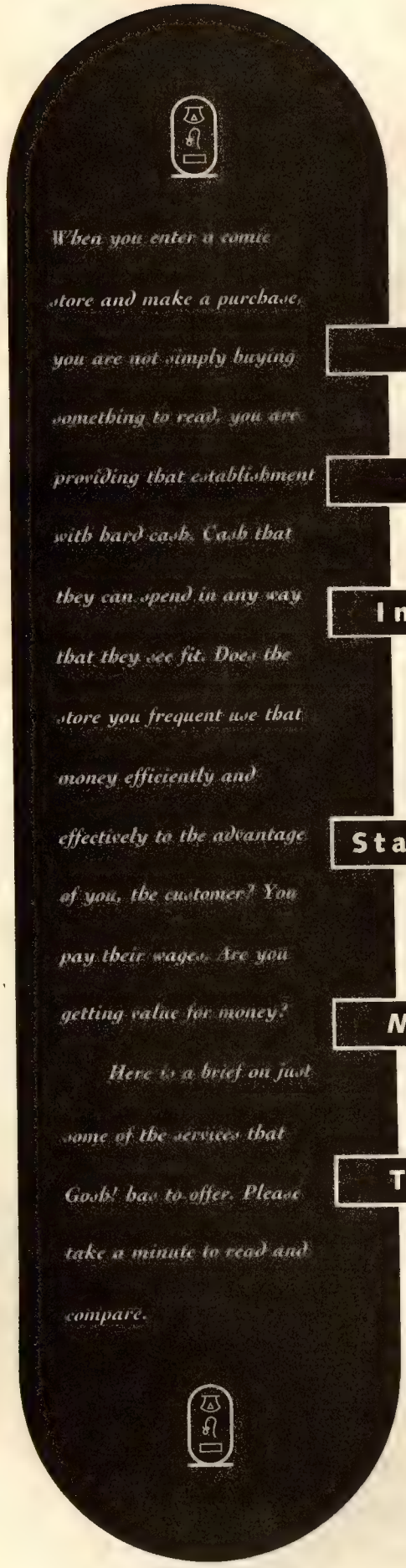

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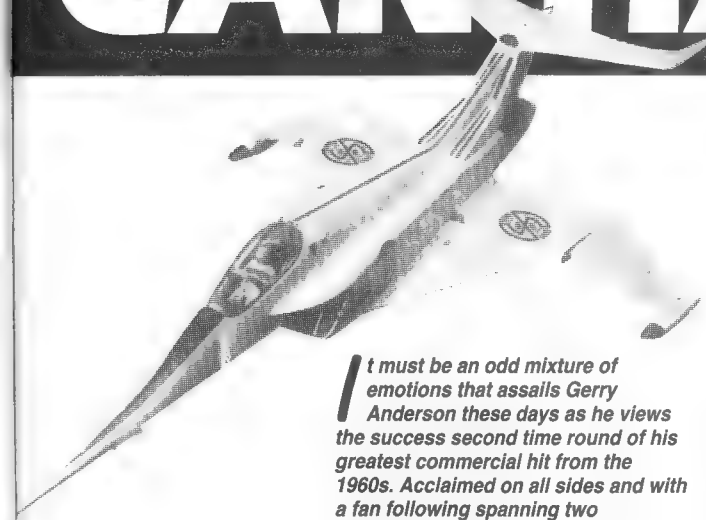
ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN...



"THUNDERBIRDS WAS A WAY OF PROVIDING MASSIVE DESTRUCTION AND FEAR OF DEATH ON THE SCREEN WITHOUT GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE"

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It must be an odd mixture of emotions that assails Gerry Anderson these days as he views the success second time round of his greatest commercial hit from the 1960s. Acclaimed on all sides and with a fan following spanning two generations,* Thunderbirds *has been the toast of children's entertainment for the past 18 months, spawning Fleetway Editions' top-selling regular comic, rocketing ratings on BBC2 and a merchandising extravaganza. Yet the man himself cannot capitalise on his foresight and has no say over his own creations any more: having sold all rights to the series over two decades ago, he is unable to use the characters in any way without the copyright holders' say-so. Any pride in creating such a success story must be slightly tinged with disappointment, surely.

Not that you would know it from talking to him. "I first went into business in 1957 with a very nice guy by the name of Arthur Provis. For six months we were on the breadline and we were just on the point of folding when at the eleventh hour a writer by the name of Roberta Lee brought with her 52 scripts of a subject called *The Adventures Of Twizzle* and they just happened to be puppet shows. That was how I got into puppetry."

After a few years of scrabbling for commissions as an independent film producer, the partners sold their company to TV mogul Lew Grade in the early 1960s. They had already produced several puppet series including *Fireball XL5* and *Stingray* for grade's ATV when a new series was called for. "We had a big studio with 250 people on the payroll," recollects Anderson. "And when a series was running out I had to think of a new one. That's a very good reason to suddenly get creative! At that particular time (1963) there was a dreadful mining disaster in Germany with a group of miners trapped underground. That triggered the whole idea of an international rescue organisation in my mind. I put this idea to Lew and he liked it."

"Then came the machines." Anderson makes inspiration sound like elementary logic. "Now, I had been in the Royal Air Force after the War and I became very interested in aircraft. When I started to think about rescue, obviously it seemed to me that the first thing one would have to do would be to get there as quickly as possible, assess the situation and report back to base. Then of course the heavy equipment would be brought up, and for this you would need a big transporter. If they were to receive messages transmitted from any part of the globe they would need a satellite, and this was long before satellites were used as they are today. We had a space vehicle simply to complete the scope of the organisation.

"Obviously it follows from there that you have to have pilots and you have to have a base and so it evolved. The pilots were named after the American astronauts of the time – *Scott* Carpenter, *Virgil* Grissom, *John* Glenn, *Gordon* Cooper and *Alan* Sheppard." Some of the characters were modelled on real people: senior puppeteer Christine Glanville recently outed Scott (pilot of Thunderbird 1) as being based on the young Sean Connery while Lady Penelope, the team's London agent, was the spitting image of Gerry's then-wife Sylvia. The craft were named after an

American acrobatic team, the Thunderbirds. Logic, too, was the mainspring behind the characters' highly distinctive oversized heads: the heads had to be big to accommodate the newly devised electronic mouth mechanisms.

One of the strengths of the series from a child's point of view is that, just as there are heroes to cheer, there are villains (most often one particular villain) to boo. "I don't mind using the word stereotype," Anderson admits. "If you have got children, I think you've got to have a *look-behind-you!* element and so

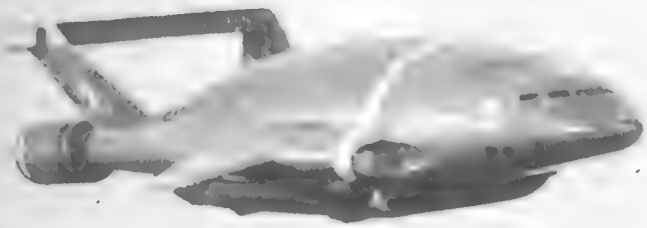
"AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME THERE WAS A DREADFUL MINING DISASTER . . . THAT TRIGGERED THE WHOLE IDEA OF AN INTERNATIONAL RESCUE ORGANISATION"

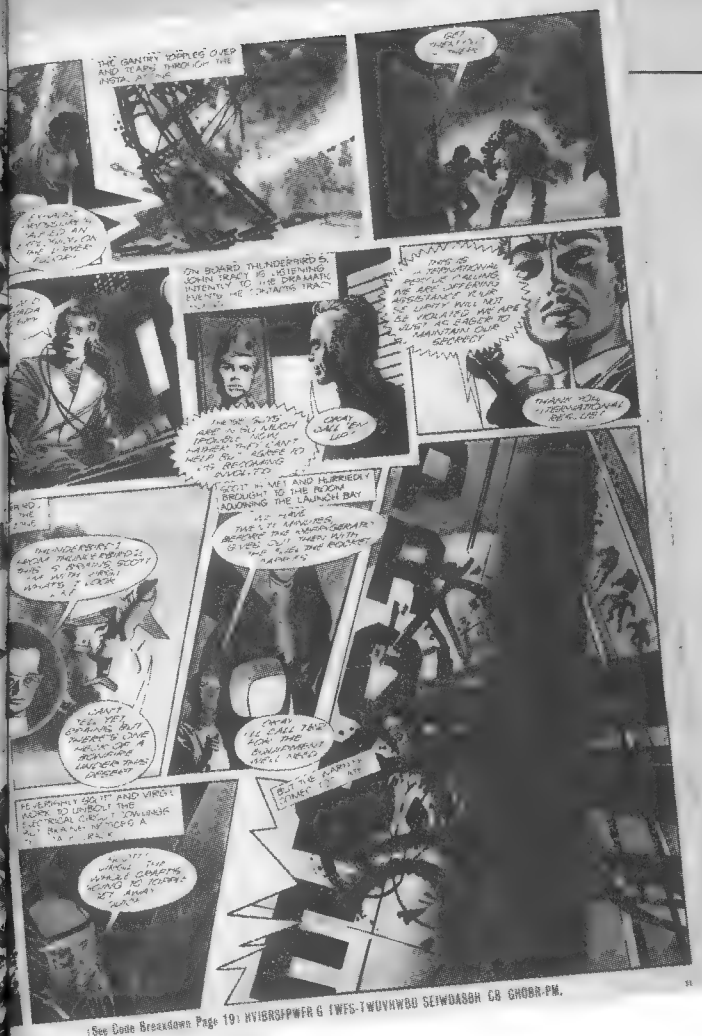
of course we have the Hood. The Hood was named because in America that means a gangster and over here it meant that he wore a hood. We always had our eye on selling to the States, which was very, very important to the shows, which were very expensive to make."

LIFT OFF

Thunderbirds made their maiden flight on TV in 1964 and were an instant success; children were captivated by the space age puppets, not just in this country but in 66 countries worldwide (Ironically the main country where it did not sell well was the States!) Would-be merchandisers swarmed like bees, the theme tune became a hit single and the programme's catchphrases took root in the nation's collective unconscious seemingly overnight. *Yes, M'Lady* (Lady Penelope's butler Parker's nasal response), *Thunderbirds Are Go!* (the call for action) and *F.A.B.* (a meaningless acronym that to the International Rescuers meant Will Do). This boomtime was all controlled by offshoots of Anderson's renamed company, Century 21, which issued licences for games, playsets, toys, records and books and published two comics; *TV Century 21* and *Lady Penelope*. At their peak, the combined circulation totalled a staggering 1¼ million a week.

After three years Anderson moved on. His next series, *Captain Scarlet*, was a technical improvement and another big bit, but gradually, as he moved away from Supermarionation with every succeeding series, the hits stopped coming. There the story might have ended, with Anderson doomed to fade into hard-working obscurity, were it not for a particularly insistent official fan club known, appropriately enough, as Fanderson, which kept alive the memory of his work in print and on video and eventually persuaded the BBC to rescreen *Thunderbirds* on BBC2. With the highest rated show in the channel's




THE GANTRY TOPPLES OVER AND TEARS THROUGH THE INSTALLATION
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THIS IS INTERNATIONAL RESCUE CALLING ALL STATIONS! ALL STATIONS! WE ARE IN NEED OF YOUR ASSISTANCE! YOUR UNITS WILL NOT BE VISIBLE, WE ARE RELYING ON YOU AS SECRET AGENTS TO MAINTAIN OUR SECRECY!
THANK YOU, INTERNATIONAL RESCUE!
WE'LL CALL THIS THE THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO!
SEE YOU LATER, SCOTT!
CAN'T SEE ANYTHING, BUT THERE'S SOME SWELL OLD ROCK AROUND HERE!
SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR!
WHAT'S THAT WHALE DOING SO FAR AWAY FROM THE SEA?

(See Code Breakdown Page 19: HVIBRSIPWFR G IWFS-TWUVHWBU SEIWDASSH CB GHOBR-PM.

ENCORE

Gerry Anderson attributes this resurgence of popularity to two things. "I think initially it was the fact that it was an hour-long programme; the basic idea of being able to put characters that children had enough time to get to know and like in terrible jeopardy and then spending the rest of the show getting them out of it using dazzling hardware. *Thunderbirds* was a way of providing massive destruction and fear of death on the screen without gratuitous violence, yet making it responsible. Plus now I think the show has so-called parental endorsement."

When pressed on the possibility of producing a new *Thunderbirds* series or even a film, the puppet maestro, who has gone on record in the past with his expressed desire for just such a project, merely observes, "There has been talk of a live action film for a long, long time. There have also been discussions from time to time which I have been involved in for a new television series. But the fact remains that the show is owned by ITC, now an American company, and nobody can make anything without their agreement." The subject is obviously off-limits for the time being.

Meanwhile Anderson continues to direct television commercials through his involvement with the Working Picture Company. Recent triumphs include the classic Swinton Insurance ads with Lady Penelope's pink Rolls-Royce teetering on a cliff's edge and the memorable Kit-Kat 'Thunderbirds Aren't Go" one with Scott Tracy ignoring the summons to action while munching on a chocolate bar, not to mention the Dire Straits video "Calling Elvis" which combined specially constructed puppets of the band with *Thunderbirds* footage. (Paradoxically the latest commercial to tweak the Anderson tradition, with *Stingray*'s Troy Tempest and Phones sharing a joke in a Pizza Hut, is nothing to do with him.)

But there are many strings to Gerry Anderson's bow and these are small beer compared to what his fantasy factory is currently working on. Next year should see the launch of the first new Anderson series to hit the screen since 1987. Ralph Titterton of Fanderson supplies the lowdown: "*G.F.I.* (G-Force Inter-Galactic) is Gerry's first cartoon animation series. Up until now his programmes have always used puppets – either string puppets or Muppet-style (using rods and things, with the puppeteer underneath the puppet) – or stop-motion animation like *Dick Spanner.* G.F.I. is an organisation out to do good, save the universe, battle evils, wrongs and suchlike. It is very much aimed at a younger audience (ten-year-olds and below).

"What is unique about this programme is that all the pre-production and production work is being done in London, but the actual animation is being

Continued page 46.

history (an unheard of 5.8 million for the first episode) and a second rescreening within a year, the seal was set on the Anderson revival.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of this latest resurrection (after the broadcasts) are the *Thunderbirds* and *Stingray* comics, with the former in particular boasting a better than respectable circulation figure of over 90,000. Editor Alan Fennell, a veteran screenwriter for several Anderson series and former editor of *TV 21*, has just started reprinting yet another old Anderson strip, Mike Noble's *Fireball XL5*, as well as the definitive *Thunderbirds* strip by legendary illustrator Frank bellamy and Ron Embleton's *Stingray* – all from the '60s comic.

The big news from the Thunderbirds comics world, however, is the forthcoming Complete Thunderbirds Story – "This is me telling the definitive history of Thunderbirds," confirms editor Fennell. "It's three pages at the moment with maybe a bit of back-up now and again. I'm not keeping the format regimented – sometimes it will be in the form of a text story, sometimes it will be just a single photograph. There will be some cutaways and I am incorporating some fact. I want to keep it fairly fluid because eventually it might well emerge as a special or a book, and by keeping it fluid I can play around with the format. it's just going to run until I arrive at Thunderbirds' lift-off, and then I shall know that it's finished!"

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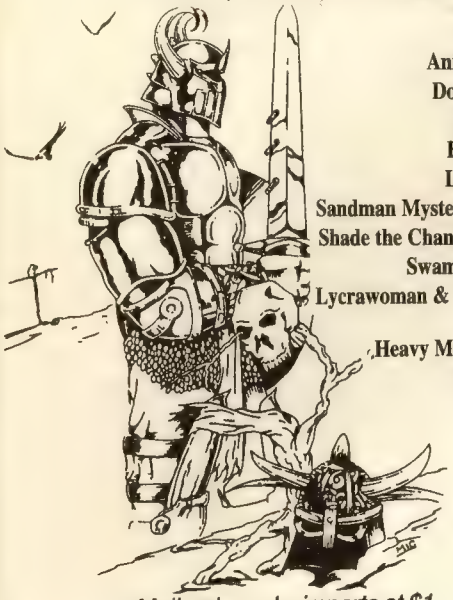

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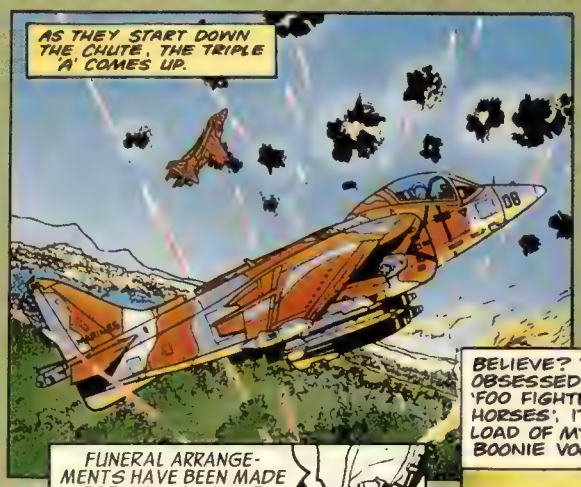
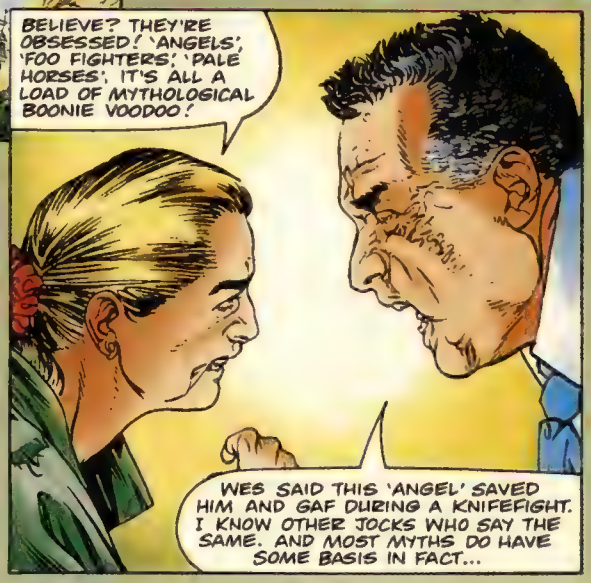
GARY ERSKINE SHOT TO PUBLIC ATTENTION WITH THE PUBLICATION OF WARHEADS, AND THE NEXT THREE MONTHS SHOULD SEE A SLEW OF NEW TITLES FROM ATOMIKA AND MARVEL US INCLUDING PALE HORSES AND A PUNISHER/WOLVERINE SERIES. STEVE HOLLAND ASKS THE QUESTIONS

COMBAT TO RIGHTEOUS, PLEASE ADOPT PROPER RADIO PROCEDURE AND HOLD YOUR POSITION.
RIGHTEOUS TO COMBAT, KISS MY RING! GAF, YOU GOT A LOCK?



TALKING PICTURES


BELIEVE? THEY'RE OBSESSED! 'ANGELS', 'FOO FIGHTERS', 'PALE HORSES', IT'S ALL A LOAD OF MYTHOLOGICAL BOONIE VOODOO!
WES SAID THIS 'ANGEL' SAVED HIM AND GAF DURING A KNIFEFIGHT. I KNOW OTHER JOCKS WHO SAY THE SAME. AND MOST MYTHS DO HAVE SOME BASIS IN FACT...

"As soon as people turn on a dictaphone I dry up completely," says Gary Erskine.

***Click* – on.**

The End. Well, thankfully not quite.

"If anything, I just let the pictures do the talking," he continues. "I've got nothing witty or interesting to say like the writers have; they're the ones with the funny anecdotes from all their nights out in London. The last interview I did was one of the worst experiences of my life because I didn't have anything worthwhile to contribute whatsoever. I do care a lot about my work, but I can't convey it through words – I do my talking through the pictures."

If that's true, Gary Erskine will be talking the hind legs off a donkey over the next few months. As this is written, *Lords of Misrule* is just about to hit the shops, *Pale Horses* is a month away, an eight page preview story having just appeared in *A1* from Epic, and Gary is hard at work on a 3-issue Punisher/Wolverine series which should be ready within the next couple of months. I've seen all three, and they're a profound, erudite statement, to the point of verbal excess. Mind you, talking pictures don't help an interviewer: at best, illustrations are out of context and cut off mid-sentence, as unfair as trying to figure out the punch line when you only know the opening two words of a joke.

In these cases, talk technique. What if someone asked you what sort of brush you use?

"It's .3 and .5 fibretips and it's the cheapest ones I can find! Not Bavarian Goat's Hair brushes or anything like that. That's why I sketch in blue line because I don't have to rub out over them. I just use what comes handy."

Fibretips have done the man proud. From nowhere, it seemed, Gary appeared three years ago in the pages of *Strip*, and promptly picked up a regular monthly series. In truth he had been part of Glasgow's tightly knit comics scene for some years, drawing for *AKA*, John McShane's long-running fanzine, and meeting up with other wannabee creators in pubs to talk comics. From the city that gave you Grant Morrison, Mark Miller, Colin MacNeil and Fat Man Press, has come a new generation of artists and writers, now boasting Robbie Morrison, Jon Beeston and, in Gary's words, "the hot shot of the month, 6 foot 4 Oztralian (sic) Corydon MacRae who has several projects in the pipeline."

The Glasgow fan scene was the inspiration that led Gary to accost Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning with sample pages: "They were on the *Sleeze Brothers* tour with John Carnell, and Dan was the editor of the new *Strip* magazine. They were impressed enough to phone up and offer me an eight page story written by John called 'Ex-Stacy' [it appeared as 'Eight Miles High'], and while I was working on that there was another call, from Steve White, offering me the chance to pencil a six-issue mini-series with Captain Britain called *Knights of Pendragon*. It was a hell of a lucky break, probably the best start any artist could hope for. *Knights of Pendragon* was fun to do, an absolute joy with every issue, and a better discipline than working on a straight superhero comic. The story relied on realistic locations and believable characters and I think that difference made it as much of a success as the environmental issues; Dan, Steve and John put that message over passionately with each issue – *Pendragon* was a nice balance between characters, the message (or, rather, information) and story. A damn entertaining read too."

Pendragon's deliberately ecological conscious storylines helped it achieve a creditable 18 issue run, having been extended beyond the original 6-issues, during which time Erskine would draw 'The Real Robin Hood' for *Crisis*, a more playful series of adventures and misadventures set in a Robin Hood theme park. Then there was a gap of a few months until the high-profile launch of Marvel UK's MyS-TECH Universe, 'Genesis '92' in the pages of *Overkill* and individual American titles with added pages and crossover material.

Of *Warheads*, Gary says "It was the most imaginative and visually

Lords of Misrule and Pale Horses
© their creators.
Punisher/Wolverine
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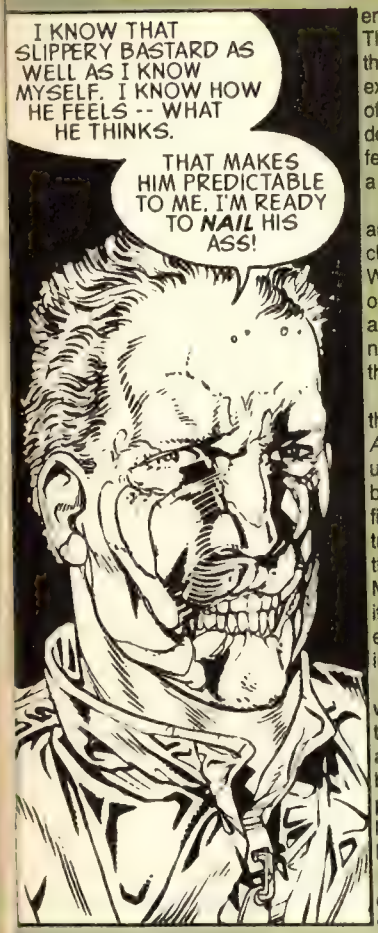

I KNOW THAT SLIPPERY BASTARD AS WELL AS I KNOW MYSELF. I KNOW HOW HE FEELS -- WHAT HE THINKS.
THAT MAKES HIM PREDICTABLE TO ME, I'M READY TO NAIL HIS ASS!

entertaining story I have ever worked on. There was a lot of creativity available through *Warheads* to expand on and experiment with. I look back on it as one of the most enjoyable pieces of work I've done and would love to go back; my only fear is that because the characters have a life of their own, I've been left behind."

Despite the popularity of the series and Gary's obvious enjoyment of the characters, he left after only two issues. Why he left is one of those questions that opens up wounds best left untouched, and explains much of Gary's nervousness when it comes to talking to the press.

"I don't know of you've read it, but there was a *Lords of Misrule* interview in *Advance Comics*; Steve White faxed me up about eight-questions, like 'Do you believe in the events in *Misrule*?' I just find the interview thing very alien, so I tried to answer the questions, but two of them were loaded: 'Why did you leave Marvel?' I said, 'I'd rather not talk about it, it's personal reasons', and 'Why did you end up going to Atomeka?' Again, it's impossible to explain.

"I don't know who transcribed it, but when it came out in *Advance Comics* they'd made it sound like we were actually talking, and it came across really badly: 'I left Marvel because of, how can I put it...personal reasons'. I really cringed because I didn't know how other people like Paul Neary would interpret it.

"It had nothing to do with the company or the people I was working with; I had some family problems and I wanted to get them sorted out – and, obviously, Marvel needed to get the comic out; because they had two different storylines there were lots of script rewrites, and Paul was trying to oversee everything. He couldn't allow an artist the time off. He couldn't just stop the comic.

"Coupled with the fact that I had a bit of a disaster – I didn't actually finish issue two and they had to get someone else in to do the last five pages – and that was it. Paul Neary's a fine editor and it was just a damn shame. And when *Advance Comics* came out I was like, 'Oh my God'.

"*Warheads* is still one of the best things I've ever done because you can do anything you wanted.

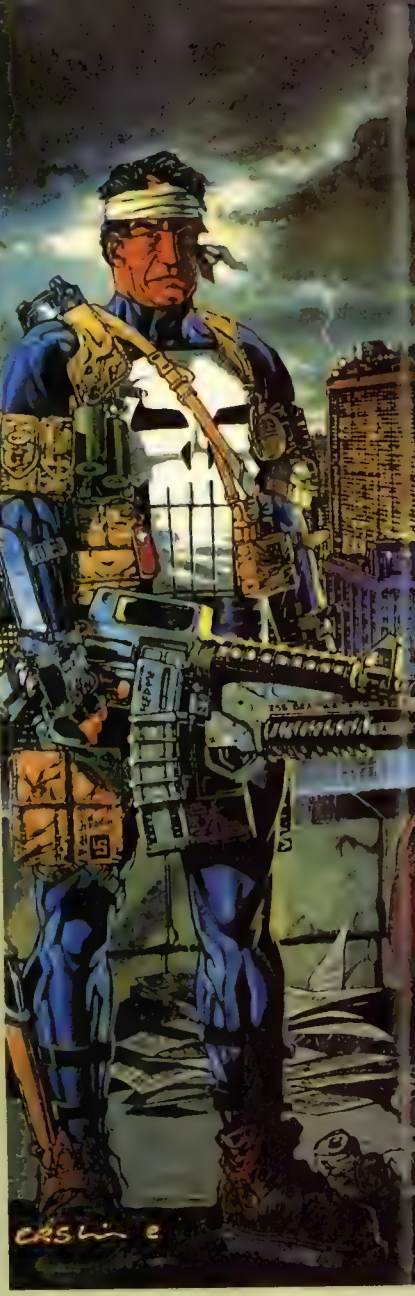
"*Overkill*'s a good package, actually a damn fine package. It's nice to see new artists coming out as well: *Overkill* is definitely aimed at people who want to try out for the US market, but it also has people like Ed Perryman. That guy's a bloody genius! He did two issues of 'Motormouth' and he did this beautiful bit where they ungagged her and she yelled – and this guy's head exploded. It was so well drawn, and I was thinking 'That's something I always wanted to do,' because you had the jaw dislocating and his head unpeeled like an orange. To see that guy doing a mainstream Marvel, something as kitsch as Motormouth, was an absolute joy. God bless Marvel for signing him up. He's really taking some chances – some of the people you're seeing on Motormouth, Hell's Angel and some of the other titles, it's like a breath of fresh air.

"I don't know if you know, but *Pale Horses* has a back-up strip by Dominic Regan called 'Sufferer Jets'. and it'll simply blow your socks off. It's amazing. Obviously a different style to me, but he actually came over – I was supposed to ink some of the pages – but we were actually looking at Perryman's work 'cause Dom, again, is a big fan of his brushwork. It's very Kirbyesque, a bit Shaky Kane. I think that's because Shaky Kane derives a lot from Kirby, but it just has such a lovely sense of design and it's very loose. I'm going to the extreme with all the detail, but...oh, brilliant stuff.

"I'd better stop now before I explode!"

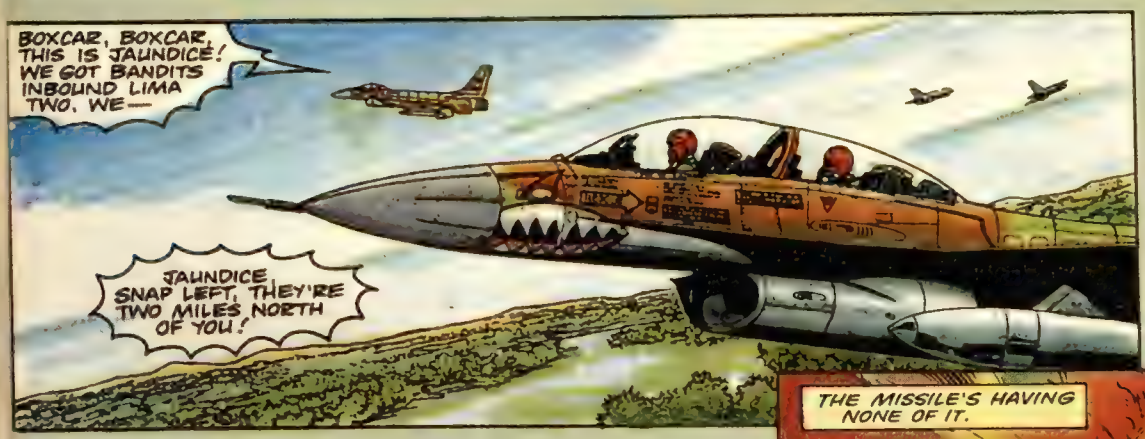
PALE RIDER

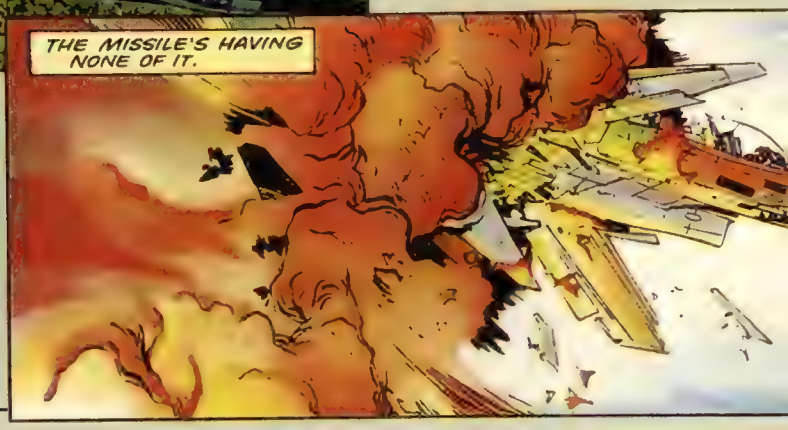
Gary's next two projects will be hitting the shops shortly, both published by Atomeka, and both covered in our February issue (you missed it? Where were you?).



First on the shelves will be *The Lords of Misrule*, a 64-page graphic novel written by John Tomlinson which explores some of the blacker side of British history, following the mental descent of artist Kieron Wallace who travels North to the village of Callow when he's commissioned to paint six covers for a paperback fantasy series. Kieron's obsessional neuroses stem from childhood; channelled by Callow's dark, rural folklore, he begins to discover some of the more horrific aspects of myths and legends, told through lapses that may be hallucinations and the steady collapse of reality around him.

"It was a definite change," says





"I DO CARE A LOT ABOUT MY WORK, BUT I CAN'T CONVEY IT THROUGH WORDS – I DO MY TALKING THROUGH THE PICTURES"

Gary. "It was interesting. *Lords of Misrule* is about retribution, horror and the little friend-to-friend tales, or at least that's how I interpreted it."

However, Gary saves much of his excitement for his second project, the 4-issue *Pale Horses*. "The colour for *Pale Horses* is unbelievably brilliant; I asked Atomeka to get Euen Peters. He worked on some of the later issues of *Pendragon* and there was something really special about issues 14 to 18. It was absolutely gorgeous stuff considering that it was mainstream Marvel. He's got a lot of subtlety in his work, and apart from maybe the clouds not being fluffy enough, that was the only thing you could pick on! He's an absolute genius and I'll be tracking him down in the future.

The artwork for *Pale Horses* is a ride on a roller-coaster, the aircraft twisting and jolting through the pages, exploiting the gut-wrenching turns and screaming metal to produce shuddering, rolling dogfights. With no sense of horizontal and vertical, no horizon and no control, it's a white-knuckle read. Gary is justifiably proud of the work he's produced so far: "I wanted to avoid the standard 'sky at the top, ground at the bottom, plane somewhere in the middle' dogfights that I'd seen in other books; we wanted to have them twisting and turning and with strange perspectives. On one panel we ran it through a photocopier to give it a shuddering, stretched effect as the pilot was banking tightly.

"We've had to take a lot of artistic license with the dogfights because generally a close call is 500 metres, but you try and draw realistically in a comic and you end up with a smudge and that's supposed to be a dogfight, so a lot of planes are closer together than they would be in real life. But apart from that I got a hell of a lot of reference from Steve so everything's correct, although we've modified things because it's set in the future. I've also used model kits because photographic reference can be rather staid and uninteresting at times, especially if you want a really interesting shot. But you can do a lot of things: you can turn it upside down, flip it over, and get some really interesting effects, and once the background and perspective is tossing from one side to the other it really gives that sense that you're being jostled around."

So what's next?

"Punisher/Wolverine. Without giving too much away, the story brings back two of the Punisher's old nemeses, Damage, from *Punisher War Journal*, and Sniper. The Kingpin is planning to get rid of the Punisher by enhancing Damage's previously crushed body with cybernetic implants and other devices, creating a sort of doppelganger. Just when things look bad, Wolverine turns up. There's plenty of double-crossing and treachery all around.

"It was written by Carl Potts a couple of years ago and will come out as a three issue series, then collected as a trade paperback."

Following the progress of the series over the past couple of months has been an experience. When you phone and politely ask how an artist is, you expect to hear that he's busy. Gary's opening gambit recently was "I've got one hundred pages to do in six weeks, so pretty bad!" which floored me.

"I'm usually a page a day man myself, so it's pretty serious, but I've got Colin MacNeil, thankfully, to help me do it, so sometimes I work with him, and he wakes up at seven in the morning and starts work at five past seven. He's a lot more disciplined – good old fifteen hour shifts.

> *"IT CAN BE PRETTY SCARY WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING AT A PAGE AND EVERYTHING IS FINISHED EXCEPT ONE LITTLE BOX"*

"Working with Colin is good for me because it can be such a lonely profession: you're just sitting there working away. We bounce ideas off each other; he'll do his colour paintings and his *Conan* covers, and I'll do the *Pale Horses* and Punisher – I certainly get a lot more work done, because I'm trying to keep up with him most of the time and he's so quick."

A page a day means you wake up to a blank page every morning.

"That's the scariest thing. I'm actually doing that at the moment – that's why I put on the music so loud. It can be quite scary when you're looking at a page and everything is finished except one little box, and someone's breathing down the phone, saying 'Get the work to me as quickly as possible'. That doesn't help.

"It's a double-edged sword when publishers say 'It looks great, but we want it twice as fast'. Colin will hopefully be colouring the covers over my line work, something we've done before with good results. I hope Colin and I can work together again: I think he's one of the best full-colour painting artists in the business. Very few people can paint and do storytelling well and, apart from Glen Fabry and John Bolton, I think Colin is one of the few people who can."

Plans for the future include a one-shot from Atomeka entitled *Blood Metals*, written by Warren Ellis. "He's quirky, eccentric and one of a kind," is Gary's conclusion. "He sent me the proposal for *Blood Metal* and we seemed to hit it off with our influences, whether it's David Cronenberg or the *Hellraiser* films. I've always been a fan of D'Israeli and *Lazarus Churchyard*, that's why it was a treat to work on that jam session in issue two; I was really amazed that he actually approached me. It was like, I worship all these people: Steve Pugh, Phil Winslade, Duncan Fegredo – worshipped them from afar – and then get Warren Ellis asking, 'Do you want to do a page, I'm a big fan of your work.' Wow!

"It was a wonderful experience to do that. We all produced the best we could for each page, desperate to outdo each other – really we were all intimidated by each other.

"I don't know whether you've seen 'Prospero's Books' by Peter Greenaway – a superb film with John Gielgud; it's full of triple montages, three films at points, one smaller than the other. Visually it's a real feast. I'd say that was one of Warren's biggest influences (we rave about it!); I want to exploit a lot of that in *Blood Metals*.

"Then I'm going to have a long, long holiday, because I've been working myself to a nervous breakdown."

I'm reminded of Warren's "Gary's an industry secret" comment back in the December issue. The onslaught of Erskine art about to hit the shops is going to bring Gary to the attention of a far wider audience, especially the high profile Punisher/Wolverine. The reticent artist is going to suffer a lot more interviews, so here's a tip to other journalists: "Talking about the art's very difficult for me because I'm not very good with words, so there's only the pictures. Let them speak. The trick is never tell me you're recording."

Click - off!

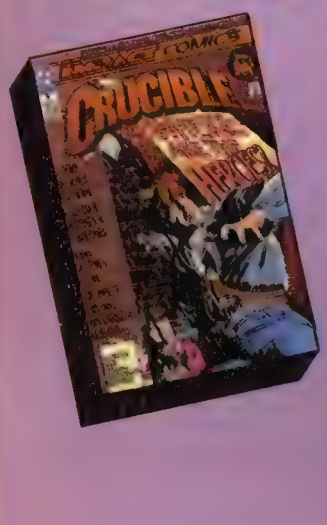
GARY ERSKINE STRIPOGRAPHY

Eight Miles High (in *Strip 3*, 17 Mar 1990, by John Carnell)
The Knights of Pendragon (in *The Knights of Pendragon 1-18*, Jul 1990-Dec 1991, by Dan Abnett & John Tomlinson. Inks by Andy Lanning, Bambos)
The Real Robin Hood (in *Crisis 56-61*, Mar-Aug 1991, by Michael Cook)
Judge Dredd: Twin Blocks (in *2000AD 741*, 27 Jul 1991, by Garth Ennis)
Warheads (in *Overkill 1-3*, 24 Apr-22 May 1992, by Nick Vince; reprinted with additional material in *Warheads 1-2*, Jun-Jul 1992; additionial material reprinted in *Overkill 15-16*, 6 Nov-20 Nov 1992)
Pale Horses (in *A1 #3*, Jan 1993/ in *Pale Horses 1-4*, 1993, by Dan Abnett & Steve White)
Lords of Misrule (in *Lords of Misrule*, 1993, by John Tomlinson & Dan Abnett)

TO MISQUOTE A LINE FROM ONE OF JOE QUESADA'S FAVOURITE COMICS – JOE QUESADA, WHO IS HE AND HOW DID HE COME TO BE DRAWING X-FACTOR? S.MA FINDS OUT.

THE Q FACT

To the casual observer of talented up and coming comic artists it might seem that Joe Quesada has had the career most penciliers dream of: a six-issue stint on the 1992 sleeper hit* The Ray, *then onto* Batman: Sword of Azrael, *a high-profile Batman mini-series in the wake of* Batman Returns, *and then promotion to regular penciller of* X-Factor, *not the biggest selling mutant book but, thanks to Peter David's intelligent scripts, certainly the most respected.



But, like many overnight sensations, Quesada's success has been years in the making; as one name artist at last year's UK Comic Art Convention replied when asked what young artists he thought had the potential to be the next big artist, the next Romita Jr., or McFarlane: "Jae Lee and Joe Quesada, although Joe's not a young artist, but he's new to comics. Don't say I said that!"

For someone who is quickly becoming one of the fan community's darlings it seems strange to learn that Joe Quesada's path to becoming a penciller has been a circuitous one, and initially he had no knowledge of – let alone the desire to work in – the comics industry:

"I sort of fell into it a few years ago. I was an illustrator major in school, and really hated illustration once I was out of school because I couldn't stand working on one single image for more than an hour before going nuts, and in illustration, of course, you have to work on it for days. So I pretty much gave up on art, but found my way back – and comics are much more satisfying because I get to work on multiple images at one time. In school, part of the push of an illustration department is, when you are given an illustration assignment, it's story-telling in one image; I guess I apply that to my covers.

"Mine's one of the usual stories with comics: I read them when I was a kid and then I stopped, then got reintroduced to them when a friend of mine who was working in the same job I was working in saw me doodling on a napkin and said 'Hey! You should really get into comics.' I said, 'Comics are for kids.' He brought me the first issue of *The Dark Knight Returns* which had just come out; I read it and I was hooked. I went into a comic shop and picked up the second issue of *Watchmen* which had just come out. So that was my reintroduction to comic books. Of course, it's all been downhill since then. I'm fairly new to comics, but I read them for about two or three years before getting involved in them.

"MINE'S ONE OF THE USUAL STORIES WITH COMICS: READ THEM WHEN I WAS A KID AND THEN STOPPED"
AND IT TAKES A MUTANT TO CATCH A MUTANT, DON'T IT?
I'M STIL THRILLED GAVE PIE TIME OF WITHOU CONSULT ME, W
• SEE STORY IMM FOLLOWING THIS
IT WAS MY CALL HAVOK.

Batman: Sword of Azrael © DC Comics

X-Factor © Marvel Entertainments Group

FRA-WHHOOZSCH!
NOW WE ATCH THE FIDEL-HUMAN BURN
LAD CAN'T YOU DO SOMETHING? MASTER BRUCE IS--
OR
--TRAPPED!
CAN'T YOU RESCUE HIM?
AZRAEL DOES NOT RESCUE! AZRAEL --HUMAN-- AVENGES!
COME! OUR WORK HERE IS FINISHED

YOURS IS A HIGH CALLING--ONE YOU DISHONORED!
HOW?
YOU ALLOWED YOUR--HUMAN--ENEMY TO FLEE WHILE YOU PAUSED ON HARLECUIN
JUST A MOMENT! THE LAD WAS ONLY DOING THE DECENT--
--INHUMANE THING. THE POOR DEVIL WAS DYING
AZRAEL IS THE INSTRUMENT OF RIGHTEOUS CRUELTY!
AZRAEL IS NOT DECENT
AZRAEL IS NOT HUMANE
HMM
CAN WE FORGET ABOUT AZRAEL UNTIL WE FIND ARE WAYNE?
EXCELLENT SUGGESTION, LAD!

It is quite clear from talking to Quesada for only a short time that he is not only a very modest person, but that he's also generous in his praise of the people he's collaborated with, often down-playing his own efforts.

"The first book I did was a TSR book for DC called *Spelljammer*, really horrible work on my part, but I guess the response was good. I had no idea, but it was based on that that they gave me *The Ray*, and it was based on *The Ray* that I was offered *X-Factor*."

The Ray is notable for being one of the few reworkings of a classic character, in this case an old Quality Comics superhero, which has been a success without the eponymous hero having to be turned into a gritty, ultra-violent psychopath.

"Jim Owlsley, the editor of *The Ray*, approached me because he thought I'd be perfect for the job and he asked me if I wanted the opportunity to recreate a character and do something in comics that was a little more like early, good Marvel comics. I said, 'Sure!' and I think I succeeded in a sense.

"The reason why I did only layouts on the last two issues was because I was swamped. I was doing the *X-Factor Annual* at the same time. It was just your basic new artist mistake: not knowing when to say 'No', which I am still trying to learn how to do – but I'm getting better. I liked what Art Nichols did. Art's very, very talented, and I was very happy with the results."

Quesada's effusive praise of his inkers begs another question: why, at a time in the comics industry when the writer/artist is king, and it has been argued long and hard that the minimum number of people working on a project ensures the best results, does Quesada remain resolutely 'merely' a penciller, laying claim to having inked only one page so far in his career (the cover to *The Ray #5*). It's not as if he's an inordinantly slow penciller, averaging one or two pages a day. Is there going to be a justification of the much disparaged conveyer belt system in which most mainstream comics are put together?

"I don't ink myself because I'm a lousy inker and I don't have the patience to draw twice. I'd rather die! Doing it once is tough enough and I'm not one of those guys who has the confidence to lay something out very loosely and, 'Boom!', go in there with ink. I'm too anal."

INFLUENCES

Because Quesada did not grow up reading comics, he does not have any sentimental attachment to any of the characters he has worked on, thus avoiding the charge levelled at some favourites who are now working on characters whom they loved whilst they were fans, that the work they are doing now is a dilution of the original. Judging by what Quesada now reads there is little danger of him going through a second childhood, and this is borne out by his influences.

"As far as current comics go I read very little due to the fact that I work so much on comics one of the last things I want to do sometimes is pick up a comic book and read it. It's a very select few things that I read at this point, but there are a few things: *Sandman*, anything Frank Miller writes – *Sin City* is a magnificent piece of work.

"My influences artwise? It's the three M's: Miller, Mignola and Mazzucchelli are the three guys whose work I love. There's a lot of other guys, I mean Romita Jr., Gibbons, and on the older front: Kirby, Alex Raymond, Alex Toth and Foster are all great influences. I look at their stuff all the time. Outside of comics my influences are mostly from film, which I use as visual reference – directors like Ridley Scott, Coppola, people of that ilk. I love watching cinematography and the way shots are laid out."

"I DON'T HAVE THE PATIENCE TO DRAW TWICE. I'D RATHER DIE!"

No series of Quesada's has shown this preoccupation so graphically as *Batman: Sword of Azrael* which has won unanimous critical acclaim for its shifting camera angles, visual effects and consistently interesting panel configurations and breakdowns. "I'm really into storytelling and I wanted to carry that across," says Quesada. "I wanted the story to be the strongest part of the book. Anything tricky I did with the visuals, I wanted that to add to the story.

"Kevin Nowlan [inker of *Sword of Azrael*] is a genius. He's given me above and beyond anything I expected. I think it's a nice marriage of styles. There's a lot of me in there and there's a lot of Kevin and I was really happy. It's kind of neat when you hand in the pencils and you go back to the office a week later and see what the inks look like because Kevin alters certain things and puts his influence in there, and it's a real treat."

Although it is Batman that has made Quesada's name known to a wider audience it appears as if he is going to follow in the footsteps of such artists as Erik Larsen, Rob Liefeld and Todd McFarlane, people who produced the main body, if not all, their early published work for DC but found comic megastar status working on a regular Marvel title; in Quesada's case it seems set to be *X-Factor*.

"*X-Factor* is the one X book I was really reading, which is why, when Bob Harras approached me with the possibility of doing an X book, I wanted to know if *X-Factor* would be available. I think Peter's a tremendous writer and I

really enjoy working with him. We're changing a lot of things, because as the team stands now in the mutant front they're not taken seriously. So the first thing I'm doing is Polaris is getting a brand new outfit; we're going to seriously rethink Multiple Man or just be rid of him; Quicksilver is going to become part of the team officially with his own outfit. Even more changes. We'll do some new things, especially with Quicksilver because people tend to forget that he is Magneto's son. And you know Magneto will come back."

X-Factor represents Quesada's first regular pencilling assignment on an open-ended comic-book. In spite of this, he has still found time to do the layouts on DC's rejigging of it's Impact line, *Crucible*. How will this workload effect his output?

"That's all I want to shoot for at the moment. I may do a short story here and a short story there. I'm going to be working on a very long extended short story project with Dave Gibbons for Atomeka, one of their monster books. We're going to be doing a little thing there that should be fun.

"As you can gather, I don't have the time to write my own stuff. I wouldn't rule it out, but then I wouldn't rule out inking my own stuff. I may do it someday but the possibilities are slim. At the moment I just want to learn how to draw and tell the best story I can."

If Joe Quesada thinks he's still learning then his best is yet to come. CW

JOE QUESADA STRIPOGRAPHY

Spelljammer (in *Spelljammer 8-13*, Apr-Sep 1991, by Barbara Kesel, Jeff Grubb, Don Krarr, Adam Blaustein. Inks by Dan Panosian 8-10,13. JQ layouts only 11 with pencils & inks by Don Heck 11, Dan Panosian 12)
The Question (in *The Question Quarterly 3,5*, Aug 1991, Spr 1992, by Denny O'Neil. Inks by Bruce N. Solotoff & Mickey Ritter)
The Ray (in *The Ray 1-6*, Feb-Jul 1992, by Jack C. Harries. Inks by Art Nichols. JQ layouts 5-6 with pencils & inks by Art Nichols)
X-Factor (in *X-Factor Annual 7*, 1992, by Fabian Nicieza. Inks by Joe Rubinstein/in *X-Factor 87*-ongoing, Feb 1993-present, by Peter David. Inks by Al Milgrom)
Batman (in *Batman: Sword of Azrael 1-4*, Oct 1992-Jan 1993, by Denny O'Neil. Inks by Kevin Nowlan)
The Crusaders (in *Crucible 1-6*, Feb-Jul 1993, by Brian Augustyn & Mark Waid. JQ layouts only with pencils by Chuck Wojtkiewicz, inks by Jimmy Palmiotti)

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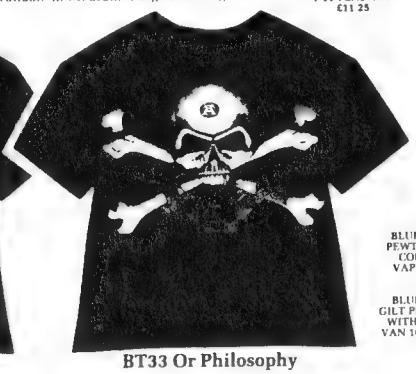
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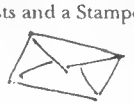

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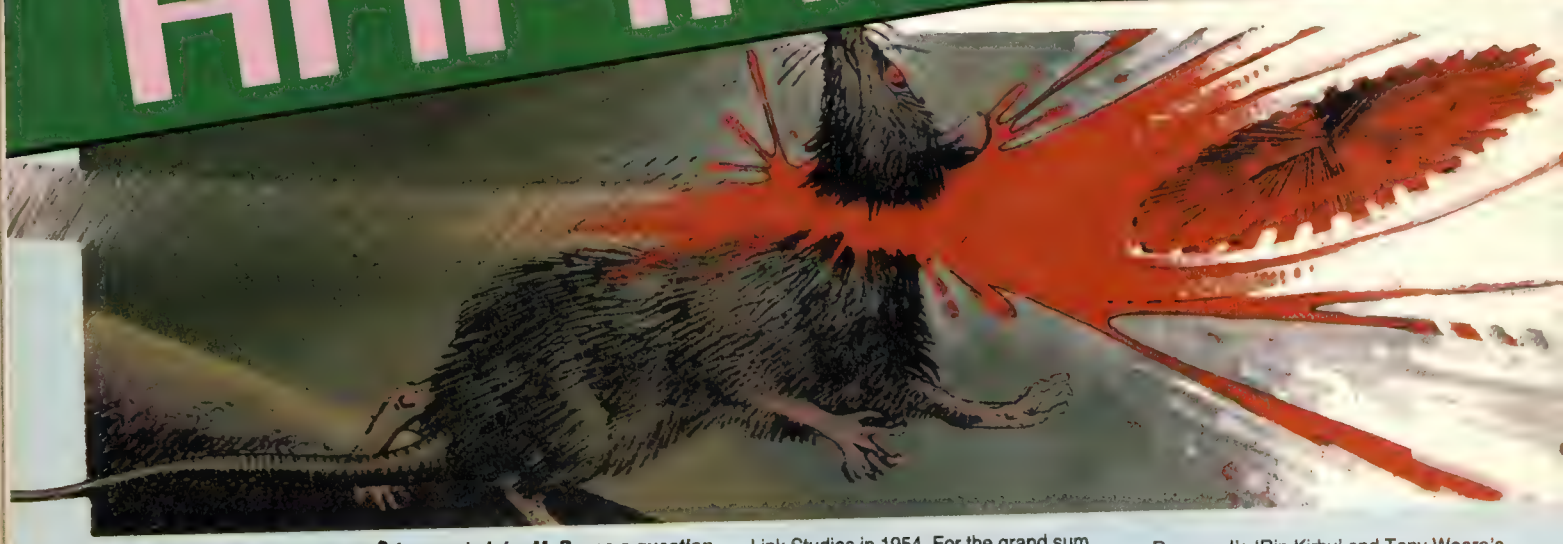
JAMES BOND

A SILENT ARMAGEDDO



If you ask John M. Burns a question about his thoughts on the characters he draws, about how excited he is to do a comic, about his plans for a strip, he'll invariably reply with the words, "It's just a job". Don't get the impression that he is not interested in the comics, however. John Burns is a working artist, a professional. If a publisher asks him for a job (black & white, colour, a newspaper strip, illustration, cover, SF, western, fantasy, crime, humour, whatever), they'll get it by the deadline. John works seven days a week, 8.30am to 9.00pm. "I've given up working through the night," he says.

A professional attitude was drilled into him when he began his career at the Link Studios in 1954. For the grand sum of £2 a week he fetched, carried, cut and pasted, washed and dried for the artists who worked there, including Harry Lindfield, Gerry Haylock, Bill Mainwaring and Edwin Phillips – great artists whose names are forgotten by all but a few these days. At night and during weekends, he went to life classes, museums, the countryside, towns, drawing all the time and learning all the time. "The learning never stops," he says. "How can you ever stop learning?"

He picked some of the greatest American illustrators to learn from: Andrew Loomis, Norman Rockwell, and Howard Pyle. On the newspaper strips of the day you only had to look at Alex Raymond's 'Rip Kirby' and Tony Weare's 'Matt Marriott' – two of many – to get some idea of the competition that John faced in order to get work. Basically, if you could not draw, you didn't get work, unlike many of today's artists, who rely on flashy technique to hide a lack of skill.

Whilst at Link House, John drew strips for *Girls Crystal* and *Schoolfriend*. The girls comics were great at the time, thanks to the Spanish and Italian artists working on them – Esteban Maroto, Pepe Gonzalez, Fernando Fernandez, and Jesus Blasco amongst them. "A publisher would fly an editor out to Spain or Italy for a week's holiday and he'd

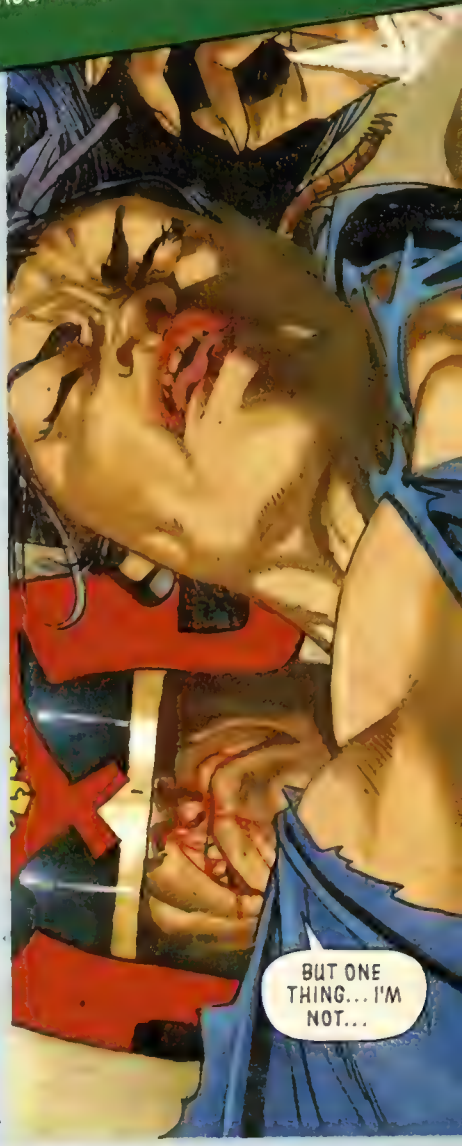
FOR MANY YEARS, JOHN M. BURNS HAS BEEN THE UNHAILED MASTER OF THE UK ADVENTURE STRIP. UNFORTUNATELY, IN RECENT YEARS, THERE HASN'T BEEN A UK ADVENTURE STRIP TO BE MASTER OF. WITH THE IMMINENT PUBLICATION OF DARK HORSE'S JAMES BOND: A SILENT ARMAGEDDON, WHICH JOHN IS PAINTING IN FULL COLOUR, PAUL DUNCAN TAKES A LOOK BACK ON A CAREER THAT HAS SPANNED NEARLY 40 YEARS.

make contact with a lot of artists. Mind you, they were better artists. They had a much better feel for the romance titles than we did over here. Perhaps it had something to do with the climate. Girls don't take their clothes off so quickly over here, do they?"

Anatomy is what it's all about. John is a figure artist; in many of his strips there are pictures of partially disrobed and sometimes naked women. For John, this started back in 1973 with the publication of the 'Danielle' newspaper strip in the *Evening News*, and continued with 'George & Lynne', 'Eartha', 'Jane', 'Julia' and 'Flatmates'. The latest is 'Girl Chat' in the *Daily Mirror*. "This is something that I got lumbered with. It is not of my own choosing. As I said to John Allard one time, I'd much prefer to draw trees than naked women. Mainly because I know more about them than women."

John has drawn his fair share of strong female characters as well. In 'The Seekers', which ran for seven years in the 1960s, Susanne was every bit a part of the action as her partner. "Les Lilley and I originally tried to get a strip off the ground called 'Miss Cheng', but the editor said that it was too much like 'Modesty Blaise'. We didn't realise at that time that Modesty had an oriental background. So Les and I were on the Tottenham Court Road, trying to think of a way of changing it, and we came up with the idea of this outfit that searched for missing persons. It was sort of based on Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe character – he never moved out of the house and had an operative moving around for him. The main character, Una Frost, did the controlling, and Jacob and Susanne did all the running about. I don't know whether it came over or not, but there was supposed to be some antagonism because Jacob fancied Susanne, and Una fancied her as well. You can't point that up too much in an adventure strip, so it was kept in the background."

Eventually, John got to work on Modesty Blaise in the late 1970s, but only for eleven months. "They sacked me. They didn't like what I was doing. They had gotten too many complaints from the readers because I draw in a similar style to Jim Holdaway, the original artist. I, and everybody else, had forgotten just how long Enrique Romero had drawn the strip, so most people now associate him



SIMON JOWETT: ARMAGEDDON MAN

I'm desperately trying to think of an opening line that won't come, so I make coffee to divert my attention from a blank screen. Writing is the farthest thing from making a cup of coffee that I can think of: routine, a series of steps that logically follow one another. It's what writing isn't. Writing is often illogical, involves hard work and an occasional bit of luck. I'm trying to find the right combination of words that imply that Simon Jowett is a lucky bastard but he's worked hard for it. Something that's not patronising.

Four cups later, I have a list of things that I know about Simon, memory clippings, a couple of quotes from press-releases, transcripts of two interviews, a list of adjectives, and I'm still looking for an introduction; most anecdotal stories I can think of take place in bars. There is one almost repeatable tale about not being allowed into one of London's less salubrious discos. Almost repeatable.

Then it strikes me that I don't have to: Simon will be known to *CW* readers for his razor-edged expose of the modern graphic novel and his incisive interviewing of John Smith in recent months, plus a pair of features from the days of *Comic Collector*. Almost a handful, and I know he worked hard at them.

Simon Jowett possesses a powerful pen – and I have the press release to prove it. By the time you read this two examples will have already elbowed their way into the shops – the first episodes of *Wild Thing* and *Black Axe*; both have recorded astonishing sales, and they're about to be followed by another winner in the shape of Dark Horse's latest James Bond offering, *A Silent Armageddon*.

Putting his powerful pen to one side for a second, Simon describes the latest Bond scenario as "a look at virtual reality, the concept of cyberspace and artificial intelligence. The basic idea is that an artificial intelligence has evolved spontaneously in the information soup that we're putting out into the world; as the global village comes closer and closer to becoming reality, it evolves out of that primeval information soup the way we evolved out of our organic soup many millions of years ago. The AI is given the code name Omega by one of the first guys who come into contact with him.

"Omega is extremely powerful because nobody really knows that it exists – nobody knows to what extent all the different data and communication systems are being increasingly linked up. There's a plan to inaugurate the world's first global optical fibre communication network that will link major centres throughout the world, and it very quickly attracts the AI. The problem is that if Omega is not brought under control he will be omniscient and omnipotent as far as human communications go: he could do what he likes with share dealings, he could rock the world economic situation, he could send the wrong firing instructions to missile bases so you could

A SILENT ARMAGEDDON

with the strip, which is unfortunate. So I suppose the change of style got up people's noses. Also, I always thought that Modesty was a bit of a bitch, which probably showed in the strips. She'd sleep with anyone to get her way – kill anyone who got in her way. She wasn't really a nice character."

John's art has a spontaneous quality that he achieves by putting all the work into the pencils, then finishing off with fast and sure ink lines. A lot of people work with a brush because they find it faster, but not John: "With a brush, you have to keep the point off the paper, otherwise you leave too much ink on the page. With a pen, you can leave it on the paper and rest your hand. So, over a long day, it is more relaxing using a pen."

On the comics front, John's early career was interrupted by National Service, returning to draw 'Wulf the Briton' and 'Kelpie the Boy Wizard' in black and white, and 'Wrath of the Gods' in colour, taking over from Ron Embleton. But his colour work didn't really click until he painted 'Countdown' in the comic of the same name. He filled shadows with colours instead of black, which has become a trademark of sorts, and is a technique he still uses today. "In 1970 we had just got our first colour television," he recalls. "If you look at it, it doesn't have black shadows. They are usually colour, so it seemed like a good idea to use that. I sometimes reversed it by painting half a face and leaving the shadow white. It makes the job more interesting, otherwise it gets boring banging the same stuff out every week. I remember on 'The Seekers' I used to pick the most difficult angles just to keep my interest."

John used flat colours throughout the seventies on TV related strips like 'UFO', 'Mission Impossible', 'The Tomorrow People', 'Space: 1999', and 'The Bionic Woman' in *TV Action* and *Look-In*. "I hated the TV orientated strips. I was trained as a strip artist, to create my own characters, not have a bunch of photographs put in my fist and told to draw them like they appear on the telly. You're restricted right away. I suppose it end up with a missile landing in your back garden."

Omega isn't new, says Jowett – he's been around for some time, but now, as we become more sophisticated, he's offered a bigger pool to play in, and people begin to notice he's there. "He's not a naturally malevolent force – he's like a big kid really, stretching, playing, finding out what he can and can't do.

"The real nasties in it are my answer to SPECTRE – we weren't allowed to use them contractually, and SMERSH obviously went out the window at the end of the Cold War. What we have now are a group called Cerberus, who use the three headed dog who guards the gates of hell as their symbol. They have three main divisions: extortion, espionage and enforcement – each division has a head of its own.

"They come to hear of Omega's existence, they see it's potential influence and set out to control it, but in doing so they attract the attention of Bond and the British Secret Service: they set out to destroy a potential rival and blow up half an Oxford College!

"The survivor from the explosion is a thirteen year-old girl, an orphan from Hong Kong called Terri Li. She's really the Bond girl – which makes a bit of a change. She's Bond's major female lead, and obviously the relationship is not the usual one that you find between Bond and the Bond girl. They grow closer during the period they spend together; they both end up on the run because it becomes clear that Cerberus have moles throughout the security community.

"I hope that I've written a more interesting relationship between Bond and another character than the usual shoot 'em or screw 'em scenario; Bond also has to renew acquaintances with darker characters that he's met before on the other side of the fence. He ends up with a sort of Dirty Half Dozen."

Despite the rather youthful female lead, all the elements of a cracking Bond yarn are there – sinister baddies and a global threat: "World freedom has to be at stake or it's not James Bond."

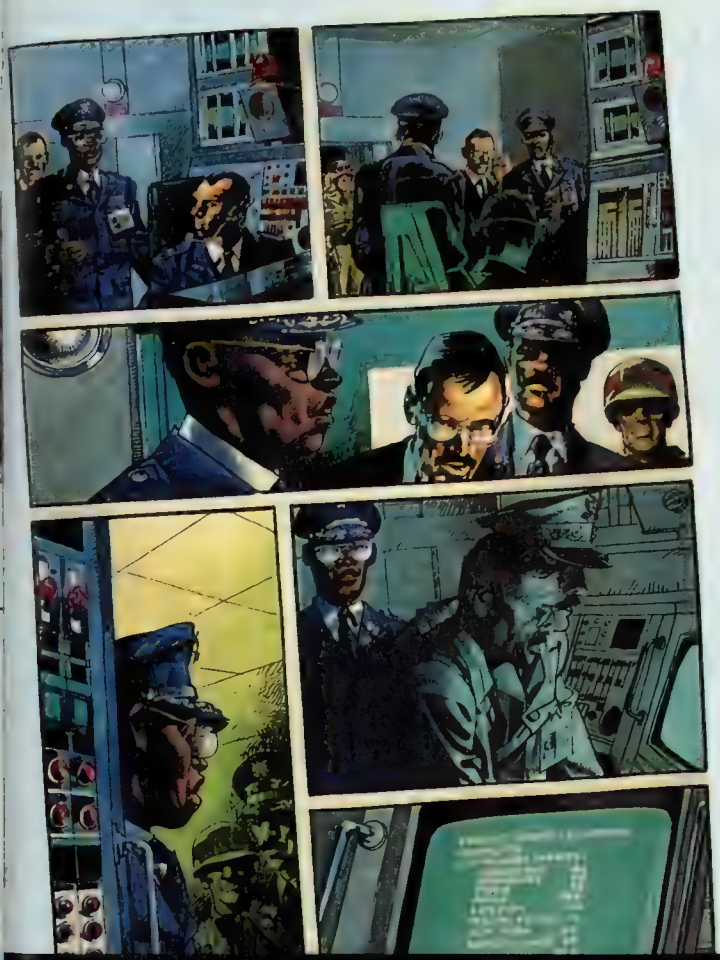
Working with John M. Burns on your first script would be enough to phase most writers, and Simon is full of praise for the artist: "I've seen the pencils for number two and the things he does with character – just in terms of facial expression and body language; the way he establishes relationships between characters in a panel is extraordinary. It's like watching actors playing the scene. John's remained flatteringly faithful to the script, which is great for someone working with an artist as experienced as he is."

In terms of publication, *A Silent Armageddon* will be Simon's third series in print, although the first written. First seen will be *Wild Thing* which, purely coincidentally, returns to the theme of computer networks, although its heroine couldn't be more different to the suave Bond figure. "I wrote the script for Bond in January 1992, and six months later I bumped into Michael Bennent who was in need of a writer. Michael gave me a brief for a storyline involving a girl and virtual reality. It's all rather strange.

"Instead of doing some clean-living

James Bond ©
Glidrose Publications
A Silent Armageddon ©
Dark Horse Comics.
Judge Dress ©
Fleetway Editions
Espers art ©
John Burns

was okay for people who couldn't draw – they could trace the photographs. Besides all that, I'm not very at likenesses." However, he continued to draw TV strips like 'How the West was Won', 'Smuggler', 'Buck Rogers in the 25th Century', and 'Magnum P.I.', all in *Look-In*. "That was where the money was. You adapt and do it. It was also a chance to do some colour. There were no other comics in Britain with good quality colour printing, and the whole comics industry in Britain has been declining since the early seventies, so you grab what you can."



It was with 'Buck Rogers' that John began to experiment more fully with three dimensional colour. It paid off on 'The Tripods' in *The Beeb* and, more significantly, *Espers* and *Zetari*. With the lack of colour comics being published in the UK, it was inevitable that John looked abroad for work. "I was approached in 1983 by the Yugoslavian agent, Ervin Rustemagic, and I agreed to do *Zetari*. She's a female mercenary who plies her trade on no particular world, set in no particular time. As far as hardware goes, everything stops at Victorian times, so there is no space stuff. I can use whatever monsters I want but technically nothing goes beyond the steam engine." Two albums were published in Europe, written by Dutch creator Martin Lodewijk, writer of the Don Lawrence drawn *Storm* series. "We were trying to get James Herbert to write it, but he was too busy. I once heard an interview with him where he tells about a Yugoslavian guy that keeps pestering him..." Neither of the albums have been published in English, and at the moment there's no news of a third series.

In 1985, John painted one issue of *Espers* for American publishers, Eclipse. "David Lloyd had finished his four-part story and suggested me to James Hudnall, the writer, to do future stories. I did one issue, but I wasn't paid for it so I did no more. I also did eight pages of the second story, four covers, and some advertising pages." John got a royalty cheque for sales of the first issue, and some years later, James Hudnall managed to get some money to John when the strip idea was sold to Epic as *Interface*.

"I like to do work like *Zetari* and *Espers* because I am given such a free hand in the techniques I use. I always stick to the script, but it is the visual interpretation that I am interested in." More recently, painting Judge Dredd for *2000AD*, John played with the format by not putting lines around the frames and, on several pages, restricting the number of colours he uses. Also, he's been trying to get rid of the black line, so that story, movement, and emotion are conveyed purely by continuous colour. Generally, though, John doesn't plan ahead. He takes each page, each panel of the script and does what he feels like at the time. "It's very instinctive."

In recent years, John has worked, and almost worked, on several projects. He has painted two *El Capitan Trueno* albums for the Spanish market – the second completed just before Christmas. A Knight Templar in a fantasy setting, John likes the historical references of Trueno; he's an enormously popular character in Spain with a long history. He even had a film crew visit his Cornish home to ask him about his thoughts on Trueno. They took it all very seriously – for once John thought it tactful not to say it was "just a job". Also on a medieval theme, John was approached to paint a comic about King Arthur for Tundra; unfortunately, rescheduling meant that the story is now being drawn by another artist. John was to have drawn character sketches and settings for a proposed cartoon, but the cartoon fell through.

What is scheduled, however, is the new James Bond book from Dark Horse. *A Silent Armageddon* is written by Simon Jowett as a Bond for the nineties. The four part mini-series is coming out bimonthly, starting in March. John's enjoying it, experimenting with the art as he did on *Espers*.

It's something of a coincidence that Bond began his career in 1954. *Casino Royale* appeared the same year that John began working at Link House. Both have lasted remarkably well, and look like they're going from strength to strength. Even after almost 40 years, nobody does it better than John M. Burns. CW

"WORLD FREEDOM HAS TO BE AT STAKE OR IT'S NOT JAMES BOND"

gal who was doing it for God and Country I was thinking about the film *Nikita* which is where I figured the initial impetus for the character might come from: she's on the wrong side of the law and she'd offered the choice of rotting in jail or working for the police in a world where virtual reality has become so predominant that its possible to live in artificial computer generated programmes. People get addicted to it in the same way that they get addicted to video games and fruit machines, and Nikki has to go into VR to rescue people who are stuck in the programmes."

Then he was offered *Black Axe*: "Michael liked the proposal I put in, so in the space of three weeks I found myself with two ongoing series to write!" And that was only the beginning.

When I phone Simon to discuss Bond I find him putting the final touches to another forthcoming series from Marvel, *Dances With Daemons* – which leads to a frantic search for a press-release so I know the background. It's a 4-issue series drawn by Charlie *(Armitage)* Adlard and "powerfully written" by Simon.

"As we speak I'm powerfully writing issue two so Charlie can do his...sizzling pencils?"

Evocative, it says here.

"I've seen his evocative pencils for number one and they are *very* evocative. *Dances* is, hopefully, a different twist on the right-on cliche about American Indians and Indian magic or medicine, whatever you want to call it. It was actually quite dark stuff and not so merciful to human beings as we might like to imagine.

"It's determinedly contemporary for a start, although it does have elements of Amerindian myths. Originally it was going to have Ghost Rider in it, but now that we're part of the Frontier line I've been able to change the structure around a little bit and include a little more of what I was initially interested in – looking at the relationships between humans and these mythical energies and mythical beasts.

"There's a wonderful quote which I'll have to paraphrase where an American Indian shaman said that medicine men hardly ever died an easy death because they were no longer human. They're bad spirits. That's something that doesn't often get mentioned; you just think they had a great, groovy relationship with nature, but they saw nature as a potentially catastrophic beast, like a tiger they were riding on."

You'll learn more about *Dances with Daemons* later in the year when we take a look at the Frontier line from Marvel, because we've still not mentioned the other James Bond story. Not due until next November, *The Shattered Helix* promises to be another globe-threatening outing for Cerebus: "Its primary concerns are ecological and environmental. Instead of trying to take over the Earth, Cerebus' machinations could lead to the extermination of all life."

Well, what can you do once you've threatened world freedom except threaten the whole planet? CW

John Burns Stripography on page 46.

LIFE

If John Freeman's name sounds familiar, so it should: after five years at Marvel as a designer, editor and senior editor on Doctor Who Magazine *and a slew of super-hero titles (*Overkill, Death's Head, Warheads, Motormouth, MyS-TECH Wars *and a number of other projects) he is retiring his editorial baton in favour of the risks and rewards of being a freelance writer. Contract or no, however, his loyalty to Marvel remains intact: after* Shadow Riders *he has three other projects lined up for the company.*

SHADOW RIDERS IS A FOUR ISSUE LIMITED SERIES FROM THE EVER-GROWING MARVEL EMPIRE OF SUPER-HERO COMICS. AN EVERYDAY SAGA OF ALIENS AND THE DEAD COME BACK TO LIFE, SPICED UP WITH TOUCHES OF NEAR-IMMORTALITY AND A DOSE OF MYS-TECH NASTINESS, SHADOW RIDERS SOUNDS JUST THE TONIC TO CHASE THOSE WINTER BLUES AWAY. CO-WRITER JOHN FREEMAN AND EDITOR STUART BARTLETT SHED LIGHT ON THE SHADOWS TO ALAN WOOLLCOMBE.

Shadow Riders © *Marvel Comics*

"BASICALLY IT INVOLVED THE TERRIBLE INCONVENIENCE OF GOING DOWN THE PUB"

Series editor Stuart Bartlett has had a less high profile but equally long tenure at Marvel. His five years at the company have seen him at the helm of Real Ghostbusters *("when it was selling decently!"),* James Bond Junior, Knights Of Pendragon *and at one point all Marvel's annuals, as well as lettering the occasional strip. It was while Bartlett was in charge of* Ghostbusters *that he struck up a working relationship with Freeman's co-writer on* Shadow Riders, *Brian Williamson, who was then the principal* Ghostbusters *artist. Having launched his comics career at Marvel, Williamson has since done work for Tundra and for the* Judge Dredd *strip in* 2000 AD.

Rounding off the creative team, artist Ross Dearsley is new to comics. Formerly an animation and advertising storyboard artist, his Mark Texeira-like drawing style has only been seen previously on a couple of Pendragon *covers. One quirk of his storyboarding background meant that he drew the first issue entirely in ink without the customary preliminary pencil stage – and achieved a record*

UH, HI THERE.
WELL IN THAT CASE, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S RIDE!
ELSEWHEN--IN A SECRET BASE, SOMEWHERE UPTIME...
WHOOO... TELL ME, OLD MAN - ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?

AFTER DARK

by becoming the first inker ever to get his own book!

So who or what are the Shadow Riders? Creator Freeman explains: "I came up with the original idea, which was for a group of characters who are not seeded from MyS-TECH itself but are against MyS-TECH. Vorin is the leader of the group – he's a high-tech alien wizard with a 600-year-old grudge against MyS-TECH since his arrival on Earth. He had innate powers when he arrived but in his encounters with the MyS-TECH board down the ages in various guises he has gained some of their powers, building up to the point now where he is able to hit out against them. What Vorin does is to bring people back from the point of death, but that doesn't mean they're zombies nor that they can't die and be brought back again."

"Vorin is able assisted by his familiar, a particularly irritating, weird alien-like creature called Goodfellow, who came from the same planet as him. He is actually quite a devious, intelligent little monster himself and his powers are as a sort of energy leech – he can draw a power from somebody but he can't use it himself so he has to pass it on to someone else. He also doesn't stop talking and we have given him some comic lines."

Freeman completes the debriefing on the human members of the team. "Roadie is a psi-caster: she creates psychic shields. She can psychically blind people who are trying to find them telepathically. Boot's the kick-ass-style cyborg leader – he has a background as a former Warhead. Stranger is a shape-shifting, phasing character who passes through solid rock. He is a former rock star. Grunt is the new boy, so called because he used to be a 'grunt' working for MyS-TECH."

"HE'S A HIGH-TECH ALIEN WIZARD WITH A 600-YEAR-OLD GRUDGE AGAINST MYS-TECH"

RIDING SHADOWS

The group derives its name from its method of transport. "Most of the powers that they have, including the transit device they use to travel from place to place, enable them to engage the enemy using guerrilla tactics – they can appear quite briefly and make an attack. However, unlike the Warheads, the Shadow Riders can't travel in time, but only in space. For their transit beams, which come across as a black shadow (hence the name of the group), you have to know the co-ordinates of where you're going because if you transit blind you could end up in the middle of a rock."

Finally, as well as the regular cast, *Shadow Riders* boasts the usual complement of guest stars: mutant flavour of the month Cable plays a major part throughout the mini-series and when he is otherwise engaged Ghost Rider kindly steps into the breach.

With the ingredients in place, how did the creators go about working out the plot? Freeman assumes an air of put-upon self-sacrifice. "Basically it involved the terrible inconvenience of going to the pub on several lunchtimes and just sitting down and working through what we wanted to do in the series. We threw ideas back, we honed it down and worked out a basic plotline. We weeded out a lot of things – we had a couple of guest stars we were going to use at one point which we dropped. I would then create a full plot which would go to Brian for dialoguing (which is his great strong point). Once I got that back I would rework the dialogue and then it would go to Stuart, who would redo it, saying 'You spelt this wrong' and 'This makes no sense whatsoever'!"

At this point editor Stuart Bartlett, who has so far manfully restrained himself from interrupting the torrent of information, bursts out laughing, I wave the microphone hopefully – "I've worked with Brian and John for years now and, with their ingenious plot ideas and Brian's exceptional ear for dialogue, they make for an unbeatable partnership. They have been called the Lennon & McCartney of comics writing – but with John's hair it's more like Elton John and Bernie Taupin!"

Laughing, 'Elton' Freeman carries on: "We found it was a really good way of working, to pass the thing backwards and forwards between us. We worked on full script because it is Ross's first comics work – it was important to get all the script in there so Ross would know to allow space for the dialogue. It meant he could learn some of the basic storytelling techniques, and he picked them up very quickly."

OVERVIEW

When it came to splitting the workload, Freeman's intimate involvement with the creation of the Marvel UK universe over the past twelve months steered him towards the overview, while co-writer Williamson homed in on the nuts and bolts. "Because I am always trying to work out how the team would plug into the whole Mys-TECH thing that Paul Neary created, sometimes I would let that run away with me. Brian has been the one who pulls back from the brink and says 'Hang on, let's concentrate on this story first!' Also, if it came to dialoguing a section involving the MyS-TECH board or the Warheads, for example, then I would do that and Brian would concentrate on the dialogue for the Shadow Riders themselves. We have come to a general agreement about how they talk – we have tried to inject some humour into it without going to the extent of undermining the characters."

With this series under their collective belt, the future looks bright for the *Shadow* men. Editor Bartlett will shortly be taking up the reins on "God knows how many" other projects, although characteristically he maintains his silence on the subject in the face of torture by microphone.

John Freeman on the other hand spills the beans with no prompting whatsoever: "I'll be writing three projects, the first of which is *Dark Guard*, featuring many of the characters we have created over the last year in a new environment. The Dark Guard is a group of heroes who will be trying to weed out the trails and devious companies that MyS-TECH have set up, as it is almost impossible to destroy MyS-TECH without wreaking cosmic havoc. They will be co-ordinated by Dark Angel, with various other characters such as Motormouth, Killpower, Colonel Liger and a couple of others involved. That will be coming out in August. I am also working on a single hero character which is also due in August and a four parter that ties in with the *Gene Pool* promotion that Marvel UK is working on for later in the year."

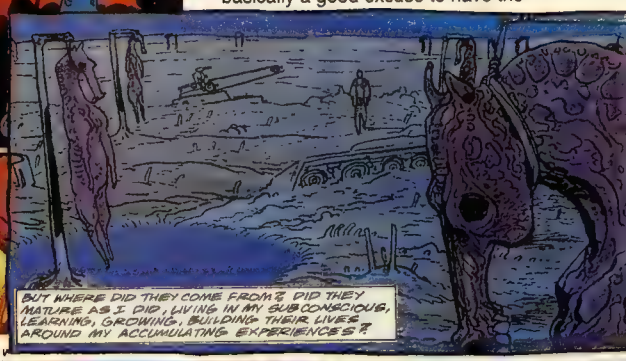
Stuart Bartlett sums up his role in the proceedings: "I'm just here to make sure John gets all the facts right, and he has . . ." – he pauses for dramatic effect before delivering the sting – ". . . so far."

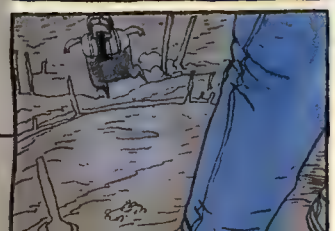
LAST YEAR THE ATTENTION OF COMIC BOOK PURCHASERS WAS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE **TERMINATOR: THE ENEMY WITHIN** MINI-SERIES AND ITS AUTHOR IAN EDGINTON. THIS HIGH PROFILE TREND LOOKS SET TO REPEAT ITSELF OVER THE COMING MONTHS AS THE **ALIENS: ROGUE** AND **KINGDOM OF THE WICKED** SERIES HIT THE RACKS. PAUL BIRCH TALKS TO IAN, HEREAFTER REFERRED TO AS EDGE – BUT FIRST, A QUESTION FOR COMPLETISTS: WHAT WAS EDGE'S FIRST PROFESSIONAL COMIC SCRIPTING JOB?

OVER TH

AW SHIT! THE ROOF'S LEAKING!
...I THINK.
WHERE AM I?
WHERE'S THE HOUSE?
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?!
IT MUST BE SOME KIND OF HALLUCINATION. I WAS SICK, NOW I'M RAVING, HAVING A NIGHTMARE OF SORTS. WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE SO DAMN COLD THOUGH?
EH, WHAT'S THAT?
JEESSUUSS, CHRISSTT!!
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING!
OHGODOHGODOHGOD...

AT FUST IT WAS JUST LITTLE THINGS- BUSTED WINDOWS AN' STUFF BEIN' THROWED. WE HAD AN IDEA IT WAS 'IM BUT WE COULDN'T PROVE IT.
WE JUST PUT 'EM DOWN TO HIGH SPIRITS AN' TEAR AWAY PRANKS...
...UNTIL THIS DAY MRS MIGGINS FOUND 'IM FEEDIN' GROUND GLASS TO 'ER PRIZE FLYIN' PIG.
SHE GAVE 'IM THE HIDIN' OF IS LIFE BUT IT DINT MAKE A SOUND. HE JUST STARED AT US WITH EYES LIKE ICE
THAT NIGHT THE MIGGINS HOUSE WAS SET ALIGHT.


BUT WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? DID THEY MATURE AS I DID, LIVING IN MY SUBCONSCIOUS, LEARNING, GROWING, BUILDING THEIR LIVES AROUND MY ACCUMULATING EXPERIENCES?



"I HAD THE TERMINATOR REBUILD HIMSELF FROM SCRATCH, COVERED IN SPIKES AND BITS OF METAL AS HE SWITCHED FROM INFILTRATION TO COMBAT MODE"

It wasn't* Deadline, *nor* Revolver *or* The Judge Dredd Megazine. *It wasn't* Blaam! #2, *although you're getting warm. Clever dicks'll probably be contemplating those three* Mr. X *issues still unpublished, but eventually paid for at the princely sum of $20 a page. You're all wrong. Tell 'em Edge.:

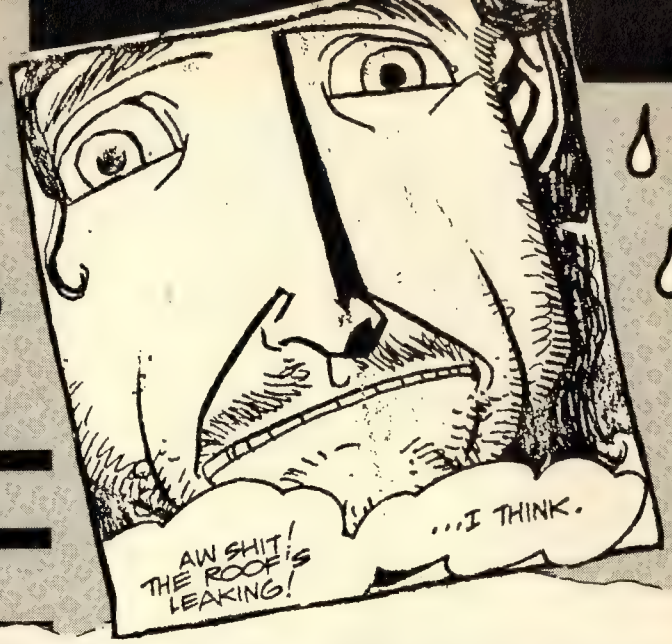
"It was* The Tufty Times."** ***Yes, as an editor at RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) this publication fell within his job description. "It was the flagship of the Tufty Club," he reveals. "I wrote this comic strip with references from the Tufty Safety books. It was pre-school playgroup information." He blushes unnecessarily, I'm all in favour of education through the comics medium.

Deadline's Downtown strips illustrated by Steve Pugh – although illegally reprinted in the rock magazine *Raw* – at last found their co-creator a market in the US, namely *Dark Horse Presents*. The Horse's Mike Richardson was impressed and offered him the aforementioned *Terminator* mini-series.

"Because it was part of a continuing sequence of mini-series, they sent me a current plot-line and I had to develop it from there. I slowed the action down a bit so the characters would be a little more human; making it more personal as opposed to spectacle. I was working within finite parameters but it was still basically a good excuse to have the

Kingdom of the Wicked © Ian Edginton D'Israeli

Aliens TM & © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.



THE EDGE

Terminator shooting and blowing things up; and putting in all those bits you wanted to see in the film but which never happened.

"I had the Terminator rebuild himself from scratch, covered in spikes and bits of metal as it switched from infiltration to combat mode. It was pure aggression. Vince Giarrano interpreted it as having huge Lucifer horns which came over really well."

So well in fact that Kenner made a toy of this version, for which financial benefits are unlikely to be reaped by either artist or writer. But that's what happens with film licensed products, and Edge doesn't seem too perturbed since he's continued to work on other such projects. Rick Leonardi illustrated his Predator story for *Dark Horse Comics #1 & 2*.

"It was set a thousand years ago in Africa, and instead of having a big strapping lad like Arnold Schwarzenegger doing the fighting I had an 11 year old boy during his rite of passage into manhood bumping into a Predator. It didn't make much sense using modern dialects, and also at the other extreme I didn't want to make it a raging caricature and upset a lot of people, so I did it as a silent story and it worked quite well because it was like a cave painting. It was a very primal, physical thing so extraneous dialogue would have been superfluous.

"Hopefully there'll be a two issue series sometime in the next year or two with that character again, but this time there will be dialogue."

ROGUE

But more immediately there's the *Aliens: Rogue* mini-series with Will Simpson on internal art and painted covers.

"It's gone really well! It's just been a rip-roaring adventure yarn from start to finish. I took it from the point of view of an eastern block consortium of Chinese, Russian and German companies as opposed to the Japanese-American one in the films. It's also to do with genetics, and hopefully I've tried to make it more cyberpunk than cowboys and indians. I've also tried to make it a lot darker, like the first and third movies, they're very dark and nihilistic, and European.

"There's also a twenty-four page epilogue coming out in *Dark Horse Comics* that caps the mini-series. And I've submitted another mini-series that follows on from that.

"Several of the previous *Aliens* mini-series were just a dream that Newt had before she popped her clogs so I've tried to give Dark Horse a new wardrobe of characters and scenarios that could be taken up and used.

"*Fat Baby Head*'s been on the cards for about two years," he says of this as yet unscheduled book. "D'Israeli's doing the main art, with Kyle Baker drawing a back-up strip which I'm ecstatic about. It's kind of a Frank Capra/David Lynch nice middle-American town where something unpleasant is going on behind closed doors . . . and then there's this character with a big fat baby's head! It's like Voltaire's *Candide* with this innocent abroad, but set against a mythical – anywhere from the thirties to the fifties – double-breasted suits and hats atmosphere. It's an atypical period piece but with some very surreal aspects to it.

He talks fondly of this future child, as he does of one now uttering its first squeal from the delivery room.

"*Kingdom of the Wicked* is about a sickly child ill in bed who made up this fantastical world, creating all its characters, politics and social life and then went on to become a famous children's author. But now he's suffering a mental crisis and having blackouts where he's slipping back into this world, only it's not exactly as he remembered it. It's like World War I with blood and barbed wire everywhere. Teddy bear fans around the world will revile me forever when they see what I've done to these cute furry creatures!

"D'Israeli's interpretation is nothing short of startling, he's one of the most underestimated UK artists. We worked so well together," then laughing he adds, "But some of the things I've had to put him through like drawing spiral staircases he hates me for!"

Kingdom of the Wicked appears under Tundra's Atomeka imprint. Edge being one of the creators who've survived the company's recent shake-down with all his projects still on the cards.

He's also replaced John Wagner who was initially announced as scripter of *Reeboot*, which is based on a computer generated cartoon series. Ian Gibson remains on board as artist, a factor which obviously excites the writer having grown up on his work within *2000AD*.

"It's set in a computer generated universe and features a character who's an expert games player where the games are a physical challenge, not played on a screen. I've written a 48 page comic book but I think there's been some kind of hold up on the TV series."

BUG-HUNT

Other Atomeka projects in the works for either their own books or as part of anthologies include 'Bug-Hunt' for *Monster Massacre*, "A kind of jokey piss-take of *Aliens*, hopefully to be drawn by Steve Pugh," Alan Burrows' *Funguys*, "About two sentient Mushrooms!", *American Gothic*, "A kind of *Nightbreed* spaghetti western," plus assorted robot and dinosaur tales. His current writing commission is *Death Dealer*, a sixty page barbarian book to be pencilled and inked by Simon Bisley.

"It's based on the character in the Frank Frazetta painting. There were some awful ghost-written books but what I'm writing bears no resemblance to them." Thank god! "The character will look the same but he's not your typical hairy-chested barbarian, what I'm trying to do is give it a twist. There's magic and realism, flying ships and gods, and gunpowder and muskets. It's a nice mix and match of concepts. Hopefully it's got enough original ideas going on for people to pick it up.

Bisley did the covers for *Terminator: The Enemy Within*, and the two had discussed collaborating on various projects such as a Conan mini-series for Marvel which proved too complicated over what couldn't be done when dealing with the Howard Estate before *Death Dealer* was negotiated by Tundra.

Nonetheless Edge has sold *Red Seas* as a mini-series to Marvel's Epic line revealing, "There's swashbuckling and black magic, rum and sorcery, and daring deeds on the high seas in the 17th century.'Phil Winslade's doing the art. It probably won't be out until the end of '93–94 but I don't mind waiting because Phil is brilliant! His work has so much meticulous detail but it isn't static and you always get a strong sense of atmosphere to it."

A busy man. On top of all this he's actively involved in another major project for Atomeka, more of which at a later date no doubt, and has been asked to write an issue of *Animal Man* but as he explains, "All I want to do is write things I would have liked to have read, and would want to read now." There's enough like minded people out there who want that same quality of commitment if the sales on *Terminator: The Enemy Within* are anything to go by. And with Ian Edginton's publishing output about to increase those self same people look set to have many a happy hour between this medium's four-colour covers. CW

JOHN BURNS STRIPOGRAPHY

(strips for *Girls Crystal*, *Schoolfriend*, etc, 1954-1957)
Guardian of the Reef (in *Express Annual 1960*)
Revs Ransome (in *TV Express 347-?*, 24 Jun 1961-?)
Wulf the Briton (in *TV Express*, c1961)
(strips for D.C. Thomson girls comics, 1961-1963)
(illustrations) (in *Frontier Circus*, 1962)
Wrath of the Gods (in *Boys World*, 6 Jul 1963-3 Oct 1964/ in *Eagle*, 10 Oct-14 Nov 1964, by Michael Moorcock/ in *Boys World Annual 1965, 1967*, 1964, 1966)
(illustrations) (in *Laramie Annual*, 1963)
Kelpie – the Boy Wizard (in *Wham! 1-36*, 20 Jun 1964-20 Feb 1965, by Ken Mennell)
Roving Reporter (feature, *Eagle*, occasional from 26 Jun 1965)
Bid For Freedom (feature, *Eagle*, occasional from 30 Oct 1965)
Space Family Robinson (in *Lady Penelope 1-52*, 22 Jan 1966-14 Jan 1967)
The Tuckwells (in *The Sunday Citizen*, 1966, by Les Lilley)
Pickwick Papers (based on the novel by Charles Dickens, in *The Sunday Citizen*, 1966)
(3 Edgar Allan Poe stories) (in *The Sunday Citizen*, 1966)
The Seekers (daily, in *Daily Sketch*, later for syndication only, 2 May 1966-10 May 1971, by Les Lilley, Phillip Douglas)
Catch or Kill (in *TV 21 #90-114,120-131*, 8 Oct 1966-4 Apr 1967, 6 May-22 Jul 1967)
Lady Penelope (in *Lady Penelope 60-65*, 11 Mar-15 Apr 1967)
Front Page (in *TV 21 #132-154*, 29 Jul-30 Dec 1967)
Countdown (in *Countdown 1-58*, 20 Feb 1971-25 Mar 1972/ in *TV Action 59-70*, 1 Apr-17 Jun 72, by Dennis Hooper)
UFO (in *TV Action 71-100,103-107,110-114,118-122,125-129*, 24 Jul 1972-13 Jan 1973, 3 Feb-3 Mar 1973, 24 Mar-21 Apr 1973, 19 May-16 Jun 1973, 7 Jul-4 Aug 1973)
Mission Impossible (in *TV Action 88-103,106-111,114-119,122-126,128,130-132*, 21 Oct 1972-3 Feb 1973, 24 Feb-31 Mar 1973, 21 Apr-26 May 1973, 16 Jun-14 Jul 1973, 28 Jul 1973, 11 Aug-25 Aug 1973)
Danielle (daily, in *Evening News*, 17 Sep 1973-14 Sep 1974, by Richard O'Neill; revived briefly in 1978; reprinted in *Danielle*, Ken Pierce, 1984)
The Tomorrow People (in *Look-In*, 28 Jul 1973-6 Sep 1975, 4 Oct-18 Oct 1975, 31 Jan-31 Oct 1976)
Doctor Who: Woden's Warriors (in *TV Comic Annual 1976*, 1975)
Space 1999 (in *Look-In*, 13 Sep 1975-24 Jan 1976, 6 Nov-20 Nov 1976/ in *Space 1999 Annual*, 1975, by Angus Allan)
The Spellbinder: Creature From Nowhere (in *Valiant Book of Mystery & Magic 1976*, 1975, by Frank Pepper)
George and Lynne (daily, in *Sun*, 26 Jul 1976-1982, by Michael Kelly (Conrad Frost))
The Bionic Woman (in *Look-In*, 7 Aug 1976-4 Mar 1978, by Angus Allan)
Damocles (daily, in *Evening News*, c1977, by Dennis Hooper)
Matt Marriott (daily, in *Evening News*, 1977)
How the West Was Won (in *Look-In*, 7 Oct 1978-7 Apr 1979)
Modesty Blaise (daily, in *Evening Standard*, 1 Nov 1978-25 Sep 1979, by Peter O'Donnell)
Smithie (daily, in *Evening News*, 28 Jul 1980-1980, by Brian Freemantle)
The Royals (daily, in *Sun*, 1981, by John Herald (Donne Avenell))
Smuggler (in *Look-In*, 25 Apr-5 Sep 1981)
Buck Rogers in the 25th Century (in *Look-In*, 12 Sep-24 Oct 1981, 28 Nov 1981-9 Jan 1982, by Angus Allan)
Magnum P.I. (in *Look-In*, 16 Jan-10 Jul 1982)
Eartha (in *Sunday*, 1982, by Donne Avenell)
The Fists of Danny Pyke (in *Eagle*, 24 Sep 1983-9 Mar 1985, by D.Spence (Wagner/ Grant))
The Tripods (in *Beeb*, 29 Jan-11 Jun 1985)
Jane (daily, in *Daily Mirror*, 16 Apr 1985-1 Sep 1990, by Roger Mahoney, Hilary King, Tim Quinn, Les Lilley)
Zetari (by Martin Lodewijk):
(album, published in Europe, 1985)
(album, published in Europe, 1987)
The Story So Far: Bryan Robson (in *Look-In*, 3 May-24 May 1986)
Dolebusters (in *Eagle*, 14 Jun 1986-21 Feb 1987, by Brian Waddle (Wagner/Grant))
Assassins (in *Espers 5*, Apr 1987, by James Hudnall)
Julia/ Lilli (daily, in *Bild* (Germany), 1987-c Aug 1989)
Flatmates (in *Go*, c1988, by John Dodd)
El Capitan Trueno (album, published in Europe, c1989)
The Polpots (in *North Cornwall Chronicle*, c1989)
Dan Dare (in *Eagle*, 15 Dec 1990-19 Jan 1991, by Tom Tully)
Judge Dredd:
Garbage Disposal (in *2000AD 738*, 6 Jul 1991, by Garth Ennis; reprinted in *Top Dog*, Mandarin, Mar 1993)
Twilight's Last Gleaming in *2000AD 754-756*, 26 Oct-9 Nov 1991, by Garth Ennis; reprinted in *Democracy Now!*, Mandarin, Sep 1992)
The Art of Geomancy (in *2000AD 762-765*, 21 Dec 1991-11 Jan 1992, by Alan Grant; reprinted in *Top Dog*, Mandarin, Mar 1993)
Raider (in *2000AD 810-814*, 21 Nov-19 Dec 1992, by Garth Ennis)
Doctor Sin: The Strange Case of the Wyndham Demon (in *2000AD Action Special*, Apr 1992, by John Smith)
Wild Cards: Borderlines (in *Epic 4*, Jul 1992, by Lewis Shiner & Melinda Snodgrass)
Girl Chat (daily, in *Daily Mirror*, 14 Dec 1992-present, by Karl Dixon)

GERRY ANDERSON

SERIES AND FILM CHRONOLOGY

Twizzle (1957) – 52 episodes, black and white, 15 minutes long.
Torchy (1960) – 26 episodes, b/w, 15 minutes.
Four Feather Falls (1960) – 39 episodes, b/w, 15 minutes.
Supercar (1961) – 39 episodes, b/w, 30 minutes.
Fireball XL5 (1962) – 39 episodes, b/w, 30 minutes.
Stingray (1963) – 39 episodes, 30 minutes, the first Anderson series to be shot in colour.
Thunderbirds (1964/66) – 32 episodes, 60 minutes, plus two films (Thunderbirds Are Go! and Thunderbird Six).
Captain Scarlet & The Mysterons (1967) – 32 episodes, 30 minutes.
Joe 90 (1968) – 30 episodes, 30 minutes.
Secret Service (1968) – 13 episodes, 30 minutes.
Doppelganger (1969) – live action film.
UFO (1970) – 26 episodes, 60 minutes, the first all live action Anderson series.
The Protectors (1972) – 52 episodes, 30 minutes.
Space: 1999 (1975) – 24 episodes, 60 minutes.
Terrahawks (1983) – 39 episodes, 30 minutes.
Dick Spanner (1987) – 2 stories (in twenty-two 5 minute parts), the first Anderson stop-motion animation series.

done in Russia. The show is in production and will see the light within the next year. Pickwick Video have got the video rights to it, but they are hoping to get it on to television some time during 1994 because if you get it onto television it's going to get better awareness, which will lead to more merchandising and so forth."

Another new show, currently on the backburner, is *Space Police*. "It's a mixture of live action and puppets, using all forms of different puppet techniques (string puppets, animated puppets, people in costumes, basically every different technique that you can imagine), all incorporated into one story. The best way to describe it is *Blade Runner* meets *Hill Street Blues* meets *The Muppets*. As the title suggests, it is basically police in space." Unfortunately, having commissioned scripts last year, the BBC have gone cold on the project and no contracts had been signed at the time of going to press.

Yet if the magic of Gerry Anderson can capture the hearts of two generations, who can say that it won't do the same for a third? To coin a phrase, anything can happen in the next thirty years.

With thanks to Gerry Anderson, Alan Fennell of Thunderbirds the Comic *and* Stingray the Comic, *Mark Sherwood of The Moving Picture Company, and Glo Thorogood and Ralph Titterton of Fanderson for all their help in compiling this article. If any readers would like further information please contact Fanderson by sending a stamped addressed envelope to: FANDERSON, PO Box 93, Wakefield, W. Yorks WF1 1XJ.*

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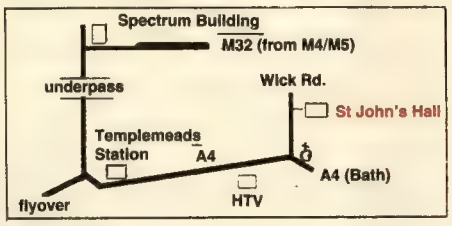

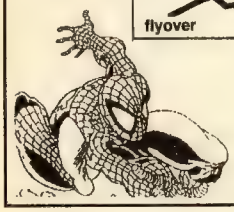

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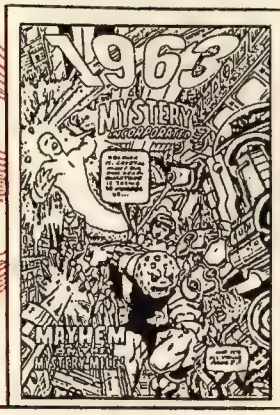

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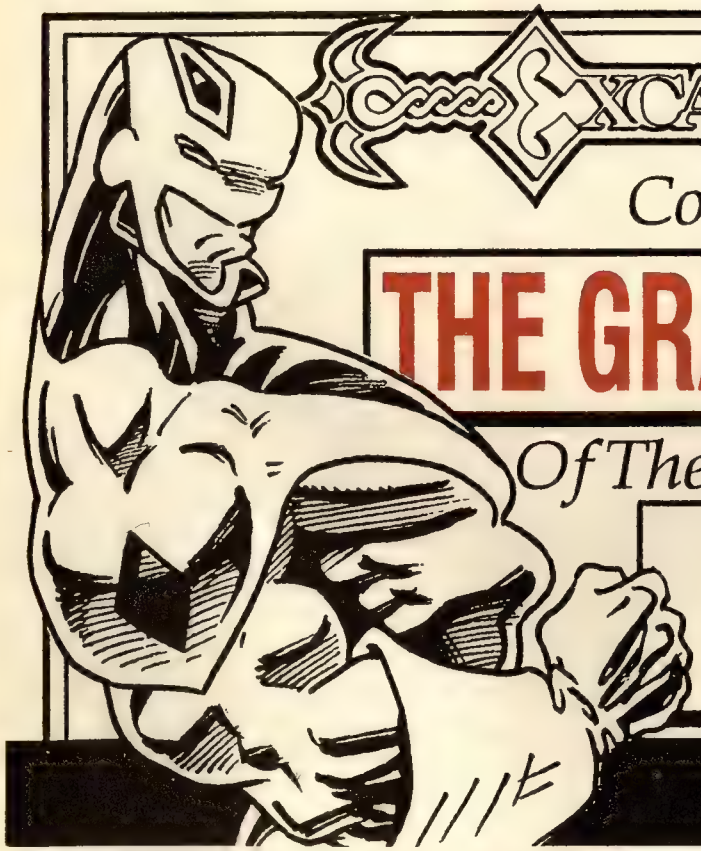

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WILD THINGS

Michael Bennent has been a mover and shaker in the British comics industry since 1986, having been in turn European liaison at Titan Books,* Crisis/Xpresso *group editor at Fleetway and editorial director at Dark Horse International. It was during Bennent's tenure as editor of* Crisis *that Paul Neary, then writing a strip for the comic, made public his high esteem of Bennent's editorial abilities. After that it was hardly surprising when Neary, Marvel UK's new editor-in-chief, head-hunted Bennent to oversee some of Marvel's new 'Heroswarm' line of titles as well as the forthcoming 'Frontier' imprint of non-Marvel Universe super-hero comics due out this summer. With the April launch of the first of the 'Heroswarm' titles (*Black Axe, Super Soldiers *and* Wild Thing*) it seemed an appropriate point to pick his brains on what it takes to create a line of comics.

As a group editor, Michael Bennent has a somewhat broader job specification than most editors: where they have their hands full supervising existing titles, Bennent has to get new projects up and running. "My brief is to find artists and writers who are interesting, both visually and with dialogue. When I do, I go to Paul (Neary) and say 'I've found this guy – do we have something for him?' If there's nothing there and he's good enough we maybe think about a new comic book, and I have to look around to see what's hot in the movies right now and which comic books are selling well."

Currently what sells are big muscles and big guns – "chunky characters and hot babes." Ironically the video era has seen the return of the traditional shoot-'em-up, albeit with a '90s gloss. "It's a sign of the times. With video games and video *per se*, kids have access to action-based material from Schwarzenegger (which has become a genre in its own right), science fiction, etc, etc. They want something that looks cool, and that's usually a huge gun or some sort of weapon, a tough face, lots of gear and armoury. If you think about it, it's really bad but that's what the kids want."

Also, thanks to the latest high speed generation video games, the readers' attention spans are not what they once were either. "The attention span has grown shorter because of video games. The shoot-'em-up ones seem to be the most popular and the kids today see that through really quickly, so a comic has to entertain for twenty minutes before they go off and do something else."

Bennent's counsel for would-be creators is not all of despair, however. "What's best is whatever inspires the individual."

INSPIRATION

When it came to creating his own characters from Marvel UK, Bennent drew his inspiration from the very beginnings of the American Marvel universe, way back in the 1960s. "When I created *Wild Thing*, *Black Axe* and *Super Soldiers* for Marvel UK, what I had in mind was quite simple. I had never before worked for a set-up like Marvel and the only way I could relate to it was by thinking about the original Marvel comics I read when I was a kid. I tried to create similar concepts again today, ones that would last for years, though of course I had to come up with different characters and different set-ups. *Black Axe* was my *Thor* in a sense, *Super Soldiers* my *Captain America*, and *Wild Thing* my *X-Men* if you want to look at it that way. They've got that sort of feel about them."

Yet these are no mere carbon copies. Take *Wild Thing*, for instance: it may have the feel of an X-book but it owes its direct inspiration to a film and an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. "There was an episode called *The Game*, where they got so addicted to a virtual reality game that they needed someone to rescue them. I thought, wouldn't it be great if the government gets operatives to rescue people from that virtual reeality world? I then thought of a girl like the one from *Nikita* (a French movie where a government organisation trained a young rogue girl from the slums of Paris to become an assasin)."

Marrying the two concepts led to *Wild Thing*. "It's set in the future with virtual reality, except there are no games available any more other than through black marketeering. Faulty micro-chip circuits have made some people so addicted to the game they can't snap out of it. What we did was have this agent (Wild Thing herself) actually jumping into the game, and she has to go through various stages until she finds the prize and comes back out."

If this sounds very different from yet another X-clone title, it is meant to be. "At Marvel UK we thought we would come up with a variation of what Marvel US do

Art © Marvel Comics

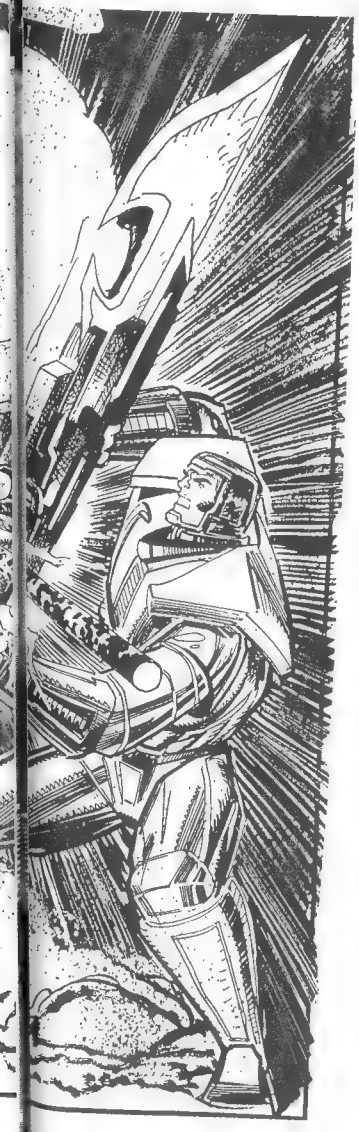
Cartoons by Dave M. Windett

very successfully, which is to go back to their existing universe for inspiration." Not that there aren't more direct links in some cases: another of Bennent's latest creations: *Super Soldiers*, bears a more than passing connection to Marvel US's original super solider, Captain America. "What we are saying is that the British off-shoot of the US super soldier programme had their own serum for creating enhanced beings. We made them look different, put them in a different environment (in this case the UK) and it creates new stories. It's a little bit regurgitated but it's still a good idea."

"THE ONLY WAY TO RELATE TO IT WAS BY THINKING ABOUT THE ORIGINAL MARVEL COMICS I READ AS A KID"

The third of Bennent's brood is his *Thor* equivalent, *Black Axe*. Like the thunder god, Black Axe is an immortal with a weapon of awesome powers, but that's where the similarities end. "Black Axe was last on Earth in the 1920s, when he was the only super-being on the planet. All of a sudden it's the 1990s and there's superheroes – he comes into touch with Death's Head and some others. He's got some soul searching to do and by the end of the first story you find out he's an immortal warrior who has been around forever."

True to his name, Black Axe does indeed have a big black axe, but it is not what you might expect. "It's science fiction oriented, it has weaponry in it (lasers and God knows what) and it can fold into a little staff. Black Axe is always advanced compared to whatever decade he's in so there is always a science fictiony feel, and we could feasibly pit him against anything and anybody because he has been around for all time. He doesn't even have to travel in time because he has already been there, so from that concept you have a lot of layers of stories."



No prizes for guessing where Black Axe got his name, but naming characters can present problems. "The guaranteed method is to look at the concept. We tend to have the character first and then think of a name later. If the title is sometimes not accepted by the marketing people you can do a sub-title: Marvel's *Cage* was an example – the sub-title *Hero For Hire* explains what the guy is. I prefer titles that refer to or relate to the figures somehow – *Super Soldiers* was just derived from the super soldiers. For *Wild Thing* I thought she looks very sexy and she's meant to be a bit of a rogue so the name is just perfect (although she has got a real name as well: Nikki Doyle)."

CONCEPT

Once the concept has been worked out and named, the final stage is to introduce it to the readers. Traditionally, Marvel characters' origins were either fully recounted in the first issue or ignored for months (if not years) on end (anyone for Wolverine's origin?). Bennent does not wholeheartedly subscribe to either approach: "My rule is action first, so the readers are familiar with what the characters do rather than who they are. That's the first step, and to present it you should have all their origins down, ideally as part of the plot synopsis of the first story. However, on some of the characters we do take our time introducing them."

Case in point: *Super Soldiers*. "We start off with one character (Hauer) who looks great, he's got a big gun and he's got a mouth on him. He is the main character because he started off as the only super solider we have over here; he gets teamed up with a woman journalist and finds out there's another surviving super soldier who was left behind on their last mission and they've got to seek him out and join forces. By the end of the first story arc you have a super solider team for hire. You also have the USAgent in there – he will actively be part of that team for five issues before he goes back to the States."

With *Black Axe*, *Wild Thing* and

Super Soldiers Bennent was in the fortunate position of being able to commission his own creations, as it were. Most creators are not so lucky: they have to sell their concept to an editor, but Bennent knows what it's like from the other side of the fence. "These days there are so many publishers around that people can do what they want. If you want to do a movie adaptation because you're a big *Terminator* fan, go to Dark Horse with a proposal. If you want to do a super-hero character, come to Marvel. If you want to do an adult comic, go to Epic or Tundra or whoever else is around. You should buy *Comic World* and see what's going on."

Another factor to be considered is the question of copyright versus royalties. "If you want to be in the mainstream, Marvel will have the copyright. Sales immediately are higher anyway – you can interact with established Marvel characters, which will help sales. Additionally if Marvel US use your character in their books, that won't hurt sales either. You also get a creation royalty on the character, which is split between the writer and the artist – as long as the character appears in his own book you will get something whether you write or draw it or not. That's Marvel acknowledging you created the book for us. If you don't want to aim at the mainstream and you want to create your own universe, you go to Epic or various publishers who allow that kind of character and you retain copyright of your characters. If you're lucky you'll get away with it and have your own comic book with your own universe."

With the project at the commissioning stage, Bennent then brings in the artist and the writer: "I might give the artist some vague description of what I'm looking for, and he comes back with a visual for the character. Some people come back with a visual that's satisfying but, although they're good draughtsmen, the character doesn't really stand. Once we have a visual, I would shop around a few writers who were already working on stuff to see whether they wanted a second book or whether they would like to do the new concept. If I can't find anyone I look in my slush pile."

Bennent's slush pile is the editor's bane, a floor-to-ceiling heap of unsolicited proposals. "There are three slush piles – you have the usable ones, the maybes and the bin. I read everything that comes in but I might not get back immediately because I can't use everyone right now. Eventually I will and if somebody else has snatched them up that's my bad luck. Anyway I'll go through that and look there mainly for dialogue – the dialogue needs to be crisp, you have to hear them talking. It has to be authentic so you can relate to it: if it's someone from the north of England you have to hear that accent and it must be accurate."

STORYTELLING

Once the creative crew have been chosen, it is up to the writer to provide instructions for the artist, either as a synopsis of the story or as a more detailed breakdown. "Some of the more seasoned artists who are used to storytelling work from a plot only – the writer comes back and just sticks the dialogue on the artwork afterwards. The younger artists, the new ones, we usually write full script with panel descriptions and page breakdowns. Once we've got either the plot or the script together we give it to the artist who has to come up with a breakdown for the whole issue – this can be as thumbnail sketches or same size stuff or even as full layouts."

There are strict, if simple, axioms that a story should adhere to. "We go through the whole issue paying attention to the storytelling, how the story should unfold. It should have a beginning, a middle and an end. At the end of a Marvel comic there is usually a cliffhanger. When you reach the end fo a story arc in some cases you get a cliffhanger again but in most cases nowadays (you look at *The Punisher* or the new horror comics they do) the story has a definite end. *X-Men* is always cliffhangers, ongoing cliffhangers as it were, but I personally am not very happy about those."

IF YOU WANT TO BE IN THE MAINSTREAM, MARVEL WILL HAVE THE COPYRIGHT

After the storyline and artist breakdowns have been approved, there can still be headaches which are up to the editor to resolve. "The penciller has to do up to six pages a week, with maybe some pages needing redrawing. After that it goes to the inker who will also do six pages a week, so that in four weeks we have a whole 22 pages in. That's quite a gruelling schedule – some people find themselves running late and other artists have to bail them out."

Once the inked artwork is in, it needs to be coloured. The traditional pen-and-ink handicraft is gradually being computerised, largely owing to the speed of turnaround in a very deadline-conscious industry. "The colorist would do it in two batches (twelve pages every two weeks) because colouring is much quicker than drawing. The beauty of computer colouring is that you get film from it at the end of the day – the computer prints out the film and we can send it off to the printer, hopefully on time, whereas if it's (manual) colour separations you have to send away for the film."

TECHNOLOGY

There are other benefits to the new technology. "In terms of colouring on a computer, the colorist takes a photocopy of the page same size as it would be printed and marks it up as he sees necessary. It's a four colour mark-up so he can only use red, blue, yellow and black, but because it's a computer you can get multiples and textures as well these days which you could never do with mechanical colour separations. You can get gradation in it and a bit of shading. In some cases the colorist can do comics that almost look blue line (ie, un-inked) – it depends on the colorist and how he uses the computer."

Like any other consumer product, attractive packaging is all important. For comics, that means two things: an eye-catching cover (particularly on the first issue) and a strong title design or logo. "The cover is usually done by a 'name' artist so the reader gets into it and the logo is sometimes done by a specialist logo designer, although most of Marvel UK's logos are done in-house."

In all this to-ing and fro-ing the editor's role is pivotal: it is part of his brief to supervise every stage of the creative process from conception to delivery to the printers. Without a doubt, an editor's lot is not an easy one, and when Michael Bennent casually mentions he has *sixteen* books at various stages of development right now it is clear his lot is harder than most! CW

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ADULT COMICS
An Introduction
Roger Sabin

The first history, from Ally Sloper to Zippy the Pinhead
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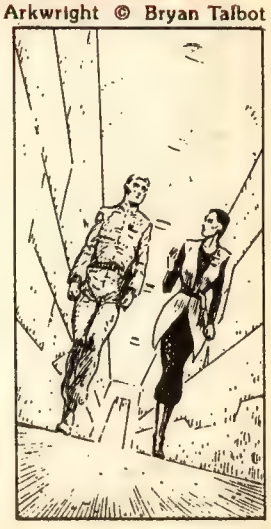
"Rose, what about **John Ridgway**? I seem to recollect **Hellblazer**, certainly **2000AD** and **Dr Who**. Status indicators show he's currently inking Book Five of **Harsh Realm**, and there's more **Epic** work coming up."

"He'll answer questions about his work on the day: I'm sure they all will. **John McCrea** should be able to spread some interesting rumours about what's following on from **Demon**, more **DC** work, I wonder. Certainly there's another **2000AD** connection with him."

"Have W.O.T.A.N. run a full check on the situation."

Arkwright © Bryan Talbot



THE LONDON CARTOON CENTRE

Hey! Let's Play DRACLEER!
YOU BE DRAC AND I'LL BE VAN HELSING! JUST LIE DOWN AND BE UNDEAD!
PAULINE, YOU'RE STRANGE
OKAY! OKAY!
NOW WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN YOU RAISE UP A BLOOD CRAZED GHOUL...!
AND RAVISH YOU FOR YOUR BODY FLUIDS?!
YOU CAN TRY!
BACK IN A SEC. THINK UNDEAD BLOODLUST?
MMM! KINKY SEX GAMES?!
BACK SPAWN OF SATAN! IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPOON, I EAT CRUCIFIX AND COWER BEFORE THE WRATH OF DR. ABRAHAM VAN HELSING - VAMPIRE KILLER!!
OOH.
DIE NOSFERATU!!!
SSSSZ...
AAAA!
YES! YES!
LATER....
OH PAULINE! COULD YOU COME HERE A MINUTE?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ME A NASTY ARE YOU??
NAPALM!
MOI?!

Calum McWilliam

Over the last 18 months there has been a great deal of speculation about the future of the London Cartoon Centre: Would the centre survive its much publicised funding crisis? Would the industry rally round to keep the LCC alive.

Well, to a certain extent the answer to both these questions is yes, but before we light the cigars and crack open the champagne in celebration, we ought to take a look at what cuts have been made and where the rescue funds have been found.

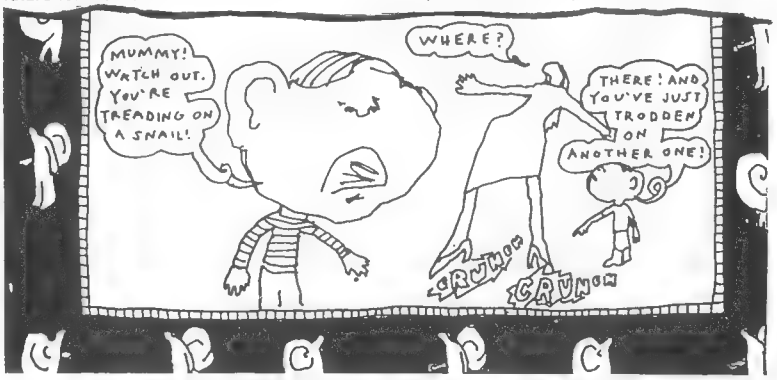
Up until 1991 the London Cartoon Centre had spent 2½ years operating classes 6 days per week. A full weekly programme saw 7 evening classes, 2 weekend workshops, and a part time daytime programme of 10 week long courses, three times per year (the daytime classes funded by Virgin Communications). The classes being offered were far reaching and varied, and offered training in comic strip creation to students with different levels of skill – beginners, intermediates, advanced. By 1991, the only secure funds remaining were for the daytime programmes, and these were only scheduled to last for one more year.

In an initial attempt to shore up the evening classes, the centre investigated sponsorship deals with individual publishers, relationships with local colleges, commercial classes charging commercial fees, and portfolio or showcase projects. Unfortunately, none of these attempts came to financial fruition as recession gripped a tighter hold on everyone's purse strings.

In September of 1991, the creation of *The Longest Comic Strip in the World* brought about a blaze of media coverage and drew public attention to the situation facing the LCC. With the revolution in continuing education, and following the demise of the Inner London Education Authority 2 years earlier, the centre found itself without any funding for the coming year. Closure seemed imminent.

The creation of a 250 feet long comic strip in and 8 hour marathon by over 125 artists was the most high profile in a long line of fundraising events. This really captured the public imagination, attracting around 5,000 spectactors on the day. The funds raised totalled £18,000 and were boosted no end by the generosity of Kevin Eastman, who had heard about the event, and the work of the centre, and decided to lend his financial support.

This money gave us breathing room and allowed some of the classes to continue until Christmas. 1992 saw a very frugal period for the Centre. We stripped classes to the bone. The evening programme was cut in half, and the daytime programme was suspended in September. We went back to the drawing board to plan the funding strategy and attempt to plan some kind of future for the LCC.



Lisa Holdcroft

The result of this is that we now have 2 new major sponsors for 1993 – The Laura Ashley Foundation and Sir John Cass's Foundation, whose funding partnership secures the daytime classes until 1994. In addition, we have a rather slimline evening programme of study which includes monthly tutorials with David Lloyd (the next two being on March 15th and April 19th), weekly scripting workshops and life drawing. Our weekend schedule has a Juniors group (12–16's) ably led by Steve Whitaker.

The Cartoon Centre will be holding an open day in June when some of the Tutors and staff will be available to answer questions, and work including extracts from "The Longest Comic Strip in The World" and a brand new "Small Press" show will be exhibited.

For further information on classes, times, dates, prices, etc., contact:
The London Cartoon Centre
14 Conlan Street
London W10 5AR.
081-969 4562/081-964 3290

and a monthly Women Cartoonists Workshop with Rachael Ball.

Wednesdays and Thursdays are drop in days for general advice (particularly useful for small press enthusiasts) but it is best to phone first just to check that we are in. We also still operate a tutorial by mail service for students living too far to visit.

This year we are looking to build our library for our students and drop in visitors, publish a Cartoon Centre Work Book, develop an outreach programme with schools and libraries around the country, and set up an information service for small press comic creators. We have also embarked on special needs projects and at present we are designing comic strip based learning materials for the partially sighted.

Throughout all of its financial difficulties the Centre has maintained its chief assets – namely the team who administrate, co-ordinate and teach the classes. The imagination, commitment and tireless efforts of a high calibre team (which still includes David Lloyd as the Senior Tutor) has ensured that the centre has not dissappeared into oblivion. This commitment has had a knock on effect into the industry in the shape of offers of help from individual professional creators, public support from The Comic Creators Guild, and much needed and welcomed support and advice from publishers like Knockabout and Fanny.

There is still a puzzlement in the minds of the LCC team: if the work we do is so worthwhile (and we are constantly told that it is), and if we are in touch with the professional aspirations of our students and expectations of the industry (and we believe we are), and if we strive to maintain high levels of educational practice and tuition (and of course we do), and if our services are continually demanded by individuals, educational institutions and organisations across the country (and they are), and if the media still thinks that what we do is sexy enough to give air time (local, and national press, TV and radio do), surely that must make us an attractive, useful and responsible organisation. If all of this is the case, why is it so difficult to secure long term funding?

We can't help but wonder if the old attitudes of academic and artistic snobbery prevail within the board rooms of the various arts councils and charitable committees.

Eve Stickler

"WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO SECURE LONG TERM FUNDING?"

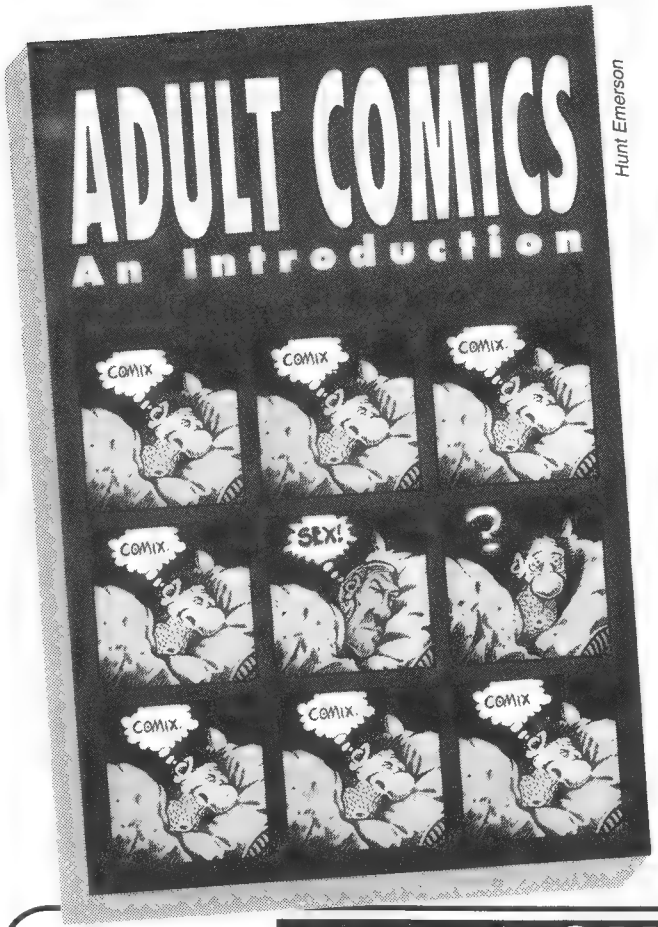
Art © respective creators

MEDIA

ADULT COMICS

Roger Sabin is a London based arts journalist who writes for several national newspapers including *The Guardian* and *Independent*, which gave me a few initial qualms about reading what would probably turn out to be a dry academic study of adult comics, couched in arty farty language and probably concluding that all art began and ended on the arts pages of the *Guardian* itself.

So I owe Roger Sabin an apology.



Hunt Emerson

Adult Comics: An Introduction (Routledge, £35.00 hardback, £9.99 paperback) is the most readable book about comics I have encountered in a very long time. Split into three main sections covering the history of mature reader comics, Sabin takes the reader through British, American and European comics, a little sketchy in places but highly readable and touching on all the main points, and certainly the most comprehensive introduction that anyone but the most die-hard comics historian could wish for.

For each section he has tried to place mature reader titles in historical context, from early satirical prints to the underground comix of the 1960s, through the "comics grow up" debacle of the late 1980s and the growth (in Britain) of today's adult humour comics.

Sabin's scope is astonishingly broad and he offers concise and telling commentary on the movement of comics to juvenile readership – in the 1900s in the UK and in the 1930s in the USA – and the slow re-emergence of adult readers, through the rebellious underground movement which used classic characters and iconography to attack established traditions and morals, through the redefinition of mainstream comic characters and the modern mature reader titles.

Sabin's chapter on the emergence of the graphic novel in the UK made fascinating reading, and his conclusions for the future – hopeful, if a little cautious – should be read by all fans and publishers. The rise and fall of the graphic novel in the late 1980s was almost inevitable, simply because it tried to tap into an audience that had not read comics for years and who considered them kids stuff; the successes were a superhero book (*Watchmen*) and a redefined but recognisable icon (*Batman: Dark Knight*). European translations were beyond the audience. Six years on, with a far more sizeable proportion of comics fans *not* growing out of reading them thanks to the grass roots level of mature reader titles available in direct market shops, we now have our first generation of truely comic-literate adult readers (the *Dark Knight* generation?), the message that comics aren't just for kids is slowly – ever so slowly – beginning to be heard, and perhaps the next wave of graphic novels will have a better chance.

In the meantime, Sabin's book is highly recommended. Look at the mistakes of the past and try not to repeat them. All that and entertainment too.

Neil Cooper

COMPUTER SECTION

GAMES

Aliens 3
Sega Mega Drive

Super smart shoot 'up that is only very loosely based on the film. You play Ripley who must 'rescue' a number of hosts who have been imprisoned by aliens. She does this by killing them, if she fails the aliens hatch and everybody's got troubles. This is basically a maze shoot 'em up, with Ripley packing an impressive range of guns, including pump action rocket launches and flame thowers. Highly impressive graphics and backgrounds certainly make this a cart worth checking out. Maybe slightly low on long term appeal, but very high on body count this one is a bit of a classic. Good stuff. 8 out of 10.

Bucky O'Hare
Nintendo NES

Really quite impressive game based on the sickly sweet cartoon and comic. With loadsa platforms to jump over, Bucky O'Hare must find and save all the members of his lost crew. Although both the graphics and the sound are reasonably enough for the lowly NES, the game will only really hold any interest for the younger games players. Better than some, but no where near as good as others. 6 out of 10.

Superman
Sega Mega Drive

The death of Superman is nothing new, in this truly appalling game, he dies really very regularly. A bog standard platform game in which the fifties super cliche takes on a rather uninteresting range of robots, flying Krypton bombers and assorted other enemies of peace, justice and the American way. And why is Superman doing all this? Well because he wants to save the children. I kid you not. A sad lack of Superman main enemies and unimpressive graphics and sound make this a real sad cart. Avoid, it sucks. 3 out of 10.

NEWS

• **Street Fighter II** looks all set to follow both **Mario** and **Zelda** with the release of a **Street Fighter II** graphic novel series. Based on the Japanese series, the books look all set to be heavily Manga influenced. Their is also a strong rumour of a **Street Fighter II** movie well into development.

Jeremy Daldry.

REVI

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

Roy Thomas, Mike Mignola, John Nyberg, Titan Books, £7.99

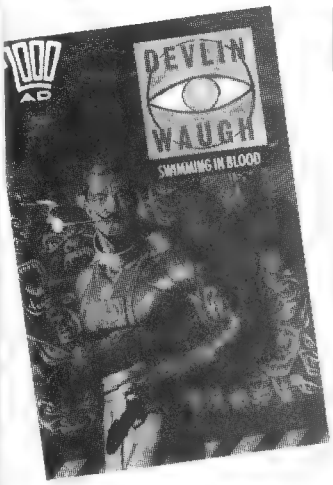
During the last couple of years vampires have, so to speak, been done to death. So it's a credit to the pedigree of this book – from Stoker, through Francis Ford Coppola to Thomas and Mignola – that it can ignite a somewhat jaded palate.

It's a tragedy, skilfully constructed and executed. While there are heroes and villains, ultimately everyone – the vampire lord included – is a victim.

Mignola's heavy, angular blacks are as striking as ever, and a handful of scenes are genuinely shocking – no mean feat in a medium in which the reader's eye is unconciously taking in the bottom of the right hand page even while reading the top of the left.

Dracula stands by itself, regardless of the film it adapts, as a worthy addition to the vampire genre, proving there's fresh blood to be sucked from the old myths yet.

(Martin Feekins)



MANDARIN

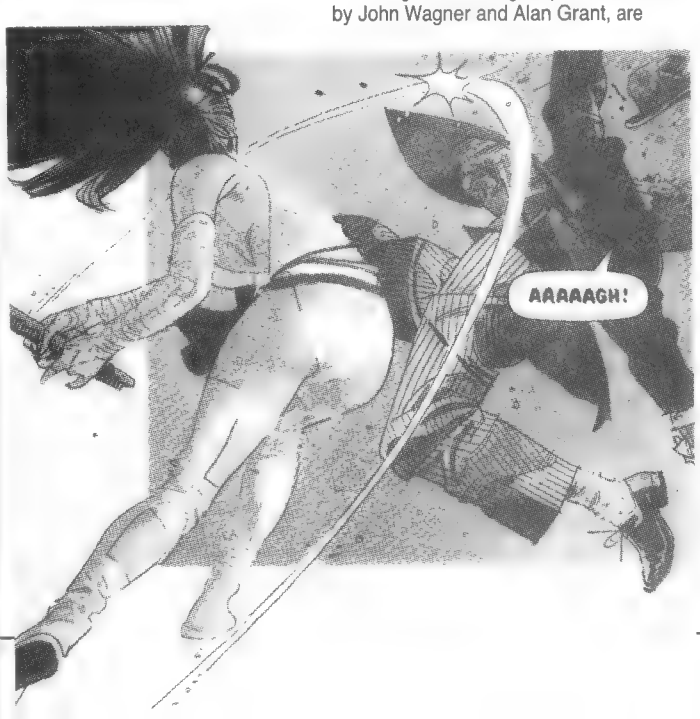
The new Mandarin *2000AD* books faultlessly repackage three Judge Dredd related series in the same format as four earlier titles from last year. Their reasonably priced reprint policy is a useful introduction to characters and stories you may not have had the patience to wade through the parent titles to read when they were originally serialised, and in one case, you may not have come across.

The straight Judge Dredd collection, *Top Dog* (£5.99), brings together a Colin MacNeil story from an annual with two John Burns stories – a one off, and the serialised 'Art of Geomancy'. MacNeil is the new contender to *2000AD*'s colour artist crown, although there's little darkness about his work. Burns, however, slips from light to dark effortlessly, photo-realistic to expressionist at the stroke of a well-practised brush.

The other Dredd is a collection of Bisley stories from the pages of *Rock Power*, a failed Maxwell European hard rock magazine. All eight episodes, written by John Wagner and Alan Grant, are classic Bisley sets – a must for Bisley fans, but you've seen every pose, every splatter before in the pages of *Judgement on Gotham*, in *Slaine*, and every other Bisley story. But any book that contains a story called 'The Great Arsoli' has got to be worth £4.99.

From the *Judge Dredd Megazine* comes *Devlin Waugh: Swimming in Blood* (£6.99), the John Smith/Sean Phillips collaboration to beat them all. It has all the inventive touches and one-liners that Smith is becoming known for, and Phillips' artwork is ten times better with decent printing and paper. David Bishop's introduction tells how Devlin challenged Dredd in popularity. Just goes to show what a bloodthirsty lot they are; this is total gore-out, claustrophobic, vampires-on-the-loose overkill with Smith's most entrancing creation since Tyranny Rex, the charismatic Vatican envoy, Waugh, a foppish Arnold Schwarzenegger with attitude. Even if you read it before, buy it for the better quality paper.

(Dave McLoughlin)



TWISTER 1

by James Hudnall & Bill Koeb, Harris Comics, $2.95

What happens when a serial killer starts killing serial killers? We all cheer? Well, not quite, because Twister, the most anti

anti hero you are likely to come across, who always leaves a courtesy card on each of serial killers he dispatches, evokes no sympathy. The script by James Hudnall is cold and clinical in its dissection of events and motivations; no doubt intended as if the reader needed to be hit over the head with this sort of sterotyping. Most of what is on offer here has been borrowed, notably from the film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. With the opening captions debating normalcy you get the feeling that a lot of old ground is about to be rehashed.

The carnage, of which there is ample, rendered by Bill Koeb, reduces the reader to the status of passive voyeur; with the attempt at understanding these killers dispensed with after the first few pages. From then on *Twister* rapidly falls back on shock tactics but this blatant ploy fails and it quickly dives head long into gratuitous titillation.

The only thing twisted here is the money from the hands of potential readers. A fine chianti anyone?

(Stephen Hooker)

EWS

SHORT REVIEWS

January was certainly a month in which patience on the part of many was finally rewarded. A new Image comic was sighted; **Enigma**, the first of the long-awaited Touchmark material came out through Vertigo, itself a long-overdue development. At long last, **The Secret Defenders** . . . just testing! And that's not all – a new **Nexus** story by Baron and Rude. How long has it been?

Yet this was simply a dummy for the killer punch: would you believe **Xenozoic Tales 12** (Kitchen Sink, $2.95)? Mark Schultz' lovingly-produced title continues in luxurious new packaging, with a better paper stock giving his artwork a real lift. His graceful, immaculately-rendered pages depict a future of ecology gone wild, with man, machine and dinosaur co-existing – Nirvana for adventure fans. The absence of colour allows the reader to drink in every detail, as Schultz reveals more facets of his enjoyable, complex characters.

Dave Sim, among others, has observed the way an irregular frequency can damag a title's viability. While Xenozoic has a steady core of followers, it is perplexing and worrying that the combination of unadventurous readers and cautious retailers works against work of this quality. Wandering around Birmingham's four direct sale outlets in a completely non-scientific survey, I found two copies. Go figure.

Perhaps Schultz should get some tips from some of the Image personnel on how to never get any comics out, and still earn a living: but wait! Here's **PITT 1** ($1.95), which is along the lines of The Hulk meets Kung Fu. Dale Keown's debut for Image shares its overwhelmingly lavish look with many of its fellow titles, but unfortunately it also shares that limp, seen-way-too-much-tv standard of writing. Good monsters though.

In Thom Webb Scott's **Motherless Child** (Kitchen Sink, $2.95), a young woman reflects on the possibilities of her future through reminiscing about her uncle, Kenny. His story is revealed as she recalls the details and incidents that comprise a life. The prose carries most of the storytelling burden, and does so in a moving, understate manner. The illustrations are rendered with obsessive stippling: even the lettering seems to consist of stipple marks at times. As beautifully drawn as it is, the parade of snapshot-like images may lend the book a melancholy, still air but reveals little else: more subtleties may have been exposed through the reproduction of the photographs on which the drawings seem to be based. The praiseworthy counter to this weakness is the way the art occasionally wanders into more avant garde territory, in pages which show Kenny's inner mind tellingly.

And so to Vertigo. For a while, DC have had this body of titles that's been difficult to define in a sentence. "They're kinda adult, and dark, and they don't have super-heroes. As such. Painted covers. Mostly. You know?" This is no way to get noticed in a crowd, and the creation of an imprint is an obvious and simple solution to this problem. It also taps into the current corporate hipness; the way company labels themselves – "Image", "Valiant" – are being marketed to the fans as collectable. Marvel have been successfully pitching Marvel-as-lifestyle for decades, but now others are joining in. Think of Image Month: collect all the Image titles and get a free Image comic. Crossovers such as *Unity* and *Mys-Tech Wars* raise the profiles of their respective companies, while those of creators and even characters are submerged.

The identity of the label is also strengthened by sharing a single style throughout its titles; Marvel UK's busy cyberpunk look, the back-to-basics feel of Valiant or Impact. For the moment,

Vertigo has a more *laissez-faire* editorial attitude: there remains little to connect the titles other than the label and a determination to be different. Maybe one day we'll just have thirty Sandman's, but for now enjoy the wild individuality of **Enigma 1** ($2.50). The strong compositions and decorative sense of Duncan Fegredo's work on Kid Eternity are married with wonderfully-loose sketching: the forms become clear only when possessed by the acidic colours. Peter Milligan's story makes sense out of confusion, finds perplexity within logic, and makes you laugh out loud.

Death: The High Cost Of Living 1, (Vertigo, $2.50) spins off the popular Sandman character in her own min-series. It's sassier than its sibling title despite the portentious title and introspective cover: it also looks very fine, thanks to the impressive team of Bachalo, Buckingham and Oliff. Neil Gaiman's story so far is more focused than in his epic sequences elsewhere, but is equally thoughtful. . . .

Which is the last adjective that could be ascribed to the Crazy 8, thje super-team which tackles its first case in the amiable **Wonder Man 19** (Marvel, $1.25). The title traverses the hero-in-Hollywood territory covered less famously, but more compellingly, in Crossfire. Jeff Johnson's clean artwork lacks the range of expression that can make this cheerfully dumb approach succeed as spectacularly as it did in those [in–?] famous early Justice League issues. The deployment of sideways-on layouts is a pet hate of this column, but at least here it's consistent.

Marvel UK's **MyS-Tech Wars 1** ($1.75), I'm sure, will be eagerly sought out by all crossover fans. For those of you who have not yet succumbed; how to describe the giddy masochism involved in these affairs? The joy of realising Part Six doesn't come out until three weeks after Part Nine: oh for the old days when the chapters weren't even numbered. We tip our hats to those all-time champion sadists DC Comics, and chastise Marvel UK for publishing a full checklist of all the episodes in the back – depriving thousands of innocent fun. *MyS-Tech Wars* has too many characters and lots of big fights and that's fine by me. Bryan Hitch's lithe artwork is a clear asset, but I long for the day when I can enjoy it while thinking "Bryan Hitch" instead of "Alan Davis".

(Richard Hill)

Review copies courtesy of Birmingham's Fantastic Store (telephone 021-643 3667). Prices are quoted in dollars; the sterling rate may vary slightly from shop to shop.

SMALL PRESS

***Nu-Comix 17**, 26pp, A4, 50p, from Simon Bowland, 'Wilton', 78 Park Lane, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 9EF.*

One of my favourites. Simon must have a good stash of money somewhere to publish up to #17 and still have issue 20 ready for publication. Amateur style of art but still fun; Slayhunter does his best to chase the Executioner without using his powers too much (each time he does it brings him closer to death), and there's a scarey sub-plot –oooh. Nick Taylor brings us chapter 3 of The Blue Gauntlet with an eye catching layout and art. Bowland and Gavin Palmer bring us the prologue to City: The Last War which looks like it might be interesting. Rik Hoskin writes and pencils while 'Cooper' inks The Judicators: Heritage; very amateur artwork featuring super heroes but there's still that sense of fun so the art style never irritates you. As I've noted before, well worth supporting and Shards by Steve Ince looks like it'll be great (starts issue 20).

***Mauretania Comics 14**, 36pp, A4, £1.60/$6.25, from Comic shops or 27 Bracewell Road, London W10 6AF.*

Chris Reynolds, Paul Harvey, Ann & Lynn Fletcher amongst others contribute to this comic. It leaves me cold. I get the feeling of 'arty-ness' but no sense of anything else. I just would not buy it but it may appeal to the old *Escape* readers.

***Warp Head 1**, 16pp, A4, £1.00, from Pretentious Comics, 25 Dulverton Road, Aigburth, Liverpool*

Bottleneck by Simon Lear has a good feel to it and despite some bad patches there *is* a lot of good artwork here and it doesn't give the impression of having been forced out of Lear. Dyarck is the second Lear strip (I suggest all cheques, etc., be made out to him and NOT Pretentious Comics) and again it is quite interesting. Nice to see and worth a quid.

(Terry Hooper)

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SMART MOVE OR PITIFUL WIMP?

Adrian Shelley
Basildon

Dear Steve,
I for one was not happy about the Gosh! outcome (letter, issue 13). I was hoping against hope that Gosh! would have had to fight, 'cos then maybe the rest of the pitiful wimps in this sad sack, shitty little industry would realize that it's about time we made a stand.

With good legal assistance, backed by solid support from the whole industry (yes, Titan, that includes you), a strong case could have been made and Customs could be shown up for the basically dull informed nitwits most of them are.

Does anyone realize that hardcore porn comics are now available in certain newsagents (at least, hardcore as far as Customs regulators are concerned...the ones who seize books like *Necron* and *Taboo*, at any rate).

Anyway, it seems that another backward step has been taken towards ignorence, darkness, repression, hypocracy, inconsistency, etc.

For the comics medium to grow up, we must allow the expression of sex as well as violence, however inept, to be seen.

It is absurd and disturbing that a comic like *Young Jeffrey Dahmer* is available while *Sex Machine* is not. The independent comics represent the future of the industry and I'd rather sell *Wendy Whitebread*, Robert Crumb, *Dirty Plotte*, *Time Wankers*, etc. than the latest purile Marvel double bagged/free trading card/ultra diamond enhanced chromium unreadable turd any day of the week. Not to mention the Valiant 1 per 100 copies ordered instant rip-off-the-customers, limited edition nonsense.

For the long term survival of the comics industry we need rubbishy sex comics as well as the few good ones if comics are to be mature as a medium.

I will continue supplying such comics for as long as I can and will not contest seizures as long as I can still get stuff through. However, if I am forced to stop importing them because of Customs getting too much of my stock, I will fight them to the limit of my abilities.

I would like to think I would have the support of the comics industry but it seems that this will not be the case. And that is a real shame, because no rights are ours unless we continue to fight for them.

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
MODESTY JABS WITH THE KONGO... AND THE ARM REACHING TOWARDS THE ALARM IS PARALYZED...
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Jeff Hawke
BY SYDNEY JORDAN
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IT'S LIKE LOOKIN AT A MIRAGE... A YOU'LL NOTICE THE NO GRAVITY!
HEELP!
COME BACK, YER STUPID LITTLE TWIT! GRAB HER, RON!
AUGH!

WHAT ABOUT NEWSPAPER STRIPS?

Bill Storie
5c Ainslie Place
Perth PH1 5DG
Scotland

Dear Steve,
I'd like to thank you for the publicity you've given to the Frank Bellamy Appreciation Society and our magazine, *The Gopherville Argus* – it's very much appreciated.

However, this letter is intended to draw attention to a milestone in comic strip history which is in danger of being overlooked: the impending 50th anniversary of 'Garth' from the *Daily Mirror*. As far as I am aware there are no publications planned to mark the event. I've been trying for almost a year to get a publisher interested in plans ranging from selected reprints to a graphic novel with art from such luminaries as Alan Davis and Colin MacNeil, but to no avail. I'm not going to criticise the publishers because on the whole the individuals I talked to were very supportive, but at the end of the day commercial decisions are what count, and they don't consider there to be enough interest in 'Garth' to make a publication economically viable.

However, if only for the sake of posterity I feel something should be done to mark the occasion, so I plan to issue a special 'Garth' edition of the *Gopherville Argus* this summer, and I'd like to invite anyone who wants to contribute a feature or artwork to contact me at the address shown.

Peter Sidebotham
Congleton

Dear Steve,
Firstly let me congratulate you on *Comic World* and, despite the cynics, you're still going strong. Long may you do so!

I wholeheartedly agree with Lew Stringer who asks for more coverage on humour strips. But why stop there? The world of newspaper strips has rarely been touched, i.e. Garth, Axa, James Bond, Jeff Hawke, Beau Peep, Calvin & Hobbes, etc. etc. Why not a special feature on these?

Bill is the chairman of the Frank Bellamy Appreciation Society, which is well deserving of support. We're working on a Garth feature to coincide with the 50th anniversary. As for other newspaper strips, it's very much the same arguement – lack of space to cover everything that everyone wants immediately – but we are planning something on Jeff Hawke creator, Sydney Jordan, in the future. If anyone can get an interview with Bill Watterson we'll publish it. We're also working on a few other features on classic British artists and strips – starting with Mike (Fireball XL5, Zero X) *Noble next month. If anyone is interested in British comics we can recommend* The Comics Journal *– no, not that one – the British comics magazine published by Bryon Whitworth, 17 Hill Street, Colne, Lancs BB8 0DH. There's a new issue due shortly.*

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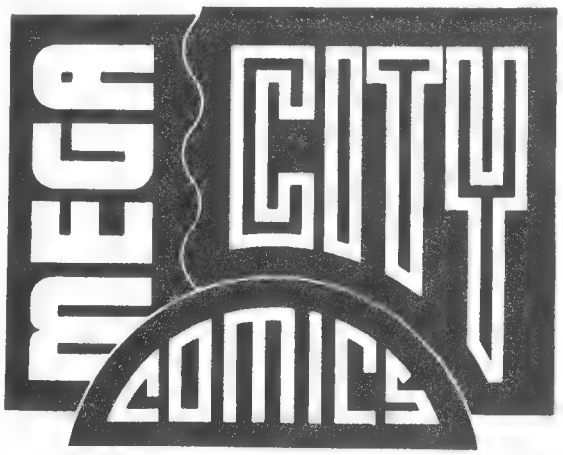

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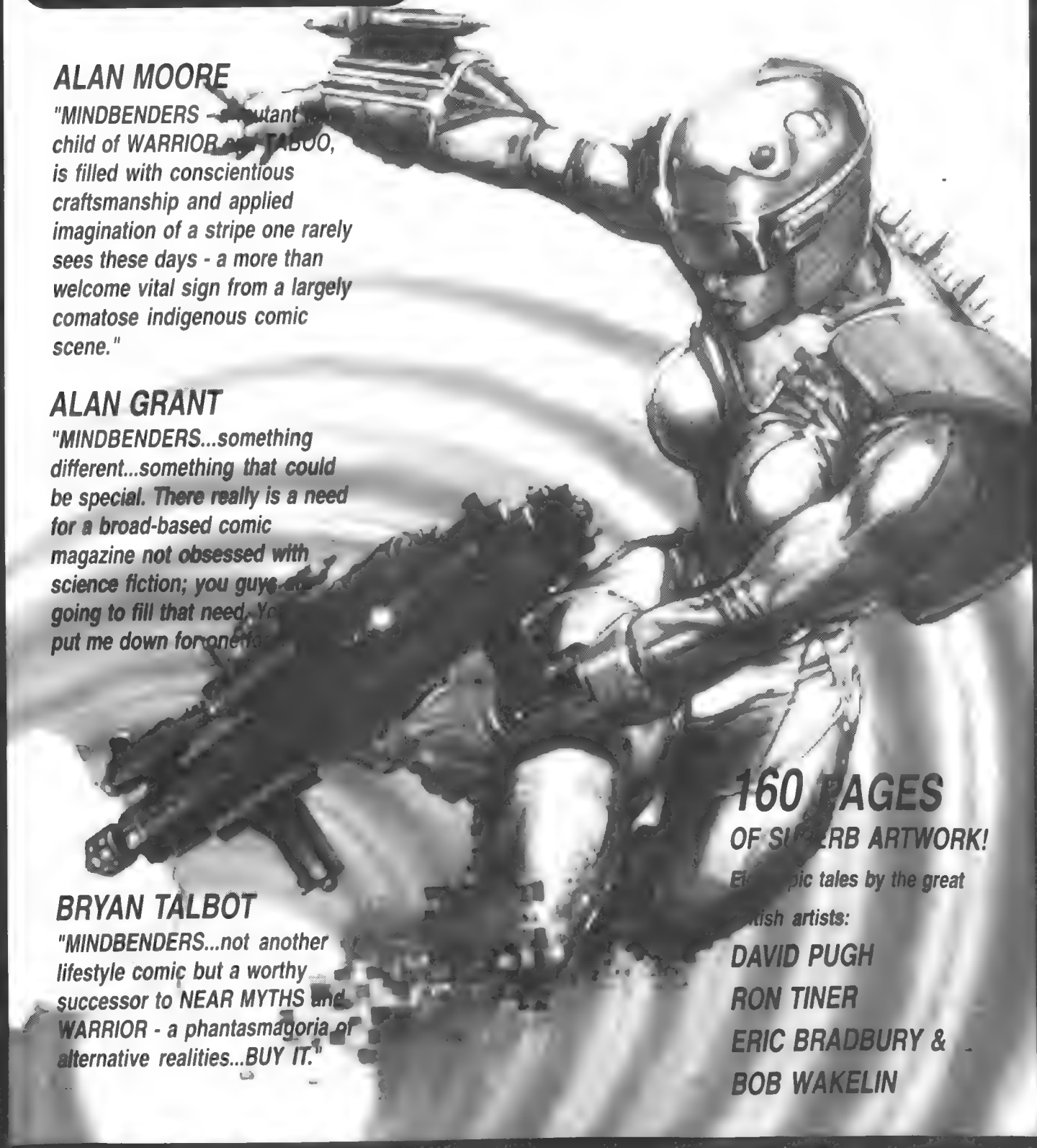

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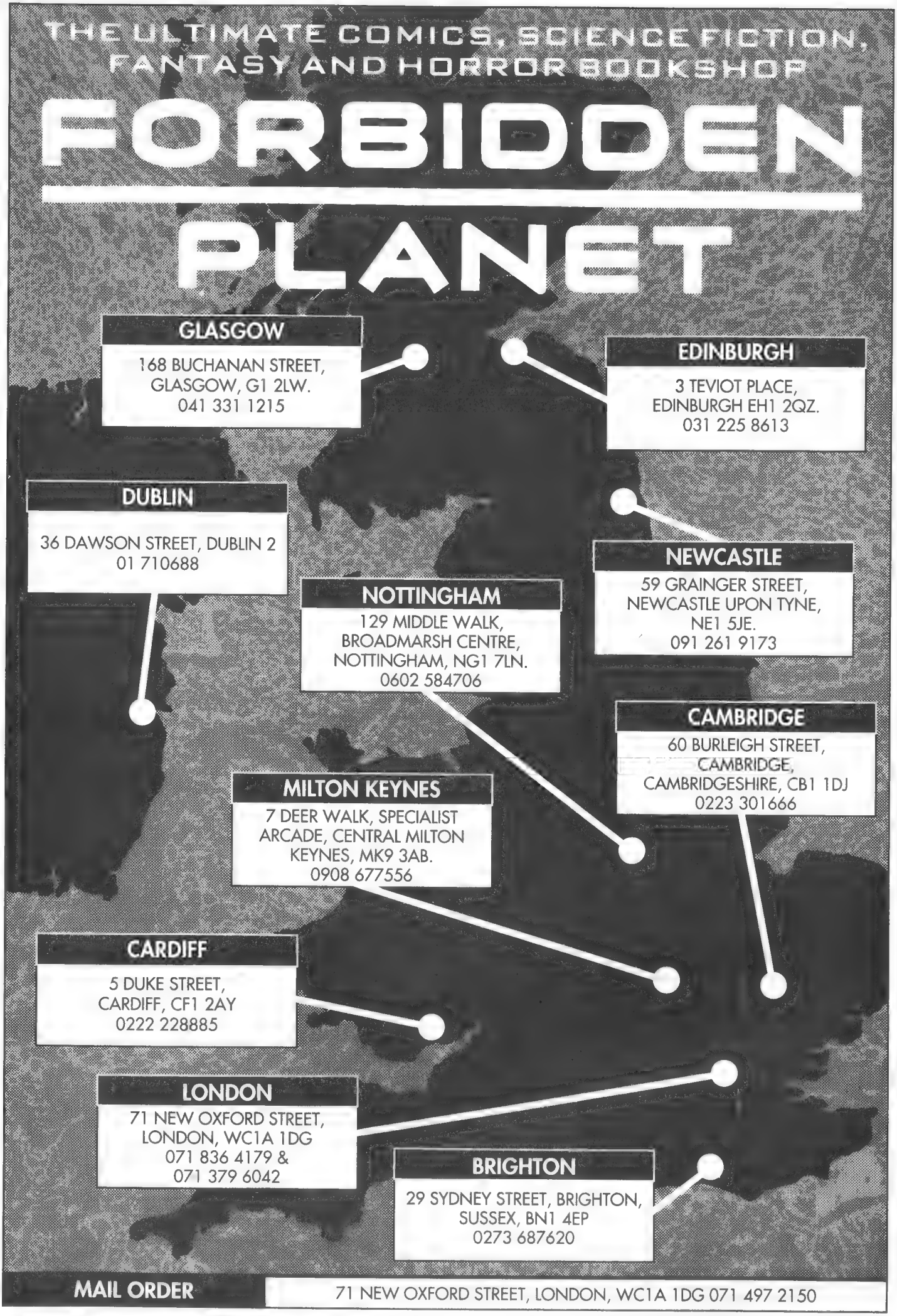
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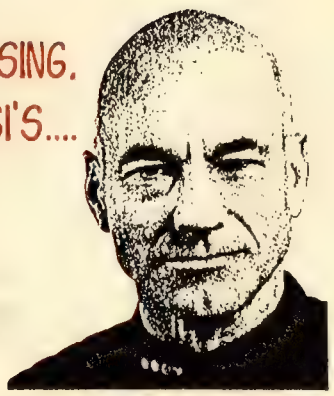

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F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P.	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
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